

## **The Dragonmasters**

### **Prologue**

A hooded person climbed on the highest hill of the area. You could see he was a fighter, everything from the way he walked to the way he carried himself he was showing it. Once he arrived at the top of the hill, he looked up at the night sky, staring closely at the stars, one in particular The Dragon Constellation. For a few minutes, nothing happened. The hooded stranger looked down, sighing heavily. Then suddenly he looked up, as if listening to an inaudible music. His stare was fixed on the constellation. Before his eyes they started to glow brighter and brighter. There was a flash and twelve beams of light were shot towards the earth.

The man smiled.

"Finally, they'll be soon here, we must prepare."

It had been two weeks since, Harry had come back from Hogwarts; two dull and boring weeks. The Dursleys had been ignoring him for the whole time, only speaking to him when it was absolutely necessary, meaning; when they ordered him to do something. As a result, Harry had already done all his homework and had started to memorize his textbooks, something which made him smile. (Hermione would be happy to hear that.) But the smile was quickly whipped off his face.

He had received a letter from Dumbledore two days after arriving at the Dursleys that told him that he couldn't communicate with anyone this summer. He was also told that he mustn't go to the Weasleys, with the rebirth of Voldemort, he had to stay at Privet Drive for the whole summer.

Since Dudley was still on diet, he wasn't eating a lot and this time he didn't have his friend's help. Fortunately he had taken some Muggle money with him and could buy some food from time to time. It was the only thing

which keep him going on, or else he would have been fainting with exhaustion. Indeed, the portion of food he was allowed to eat at



meals was just enough for someone who didn't do nothing, but not for someone who had

to work. And he was being forced to work. The Dursleys had already made him clean the whole house, and the attic. He had to cook, go with his aunt to the supermarket to carry her bags. Now, he had been assigned at cleaning the garden, well if you could still call it a garden. It was more likely a small jungle. Harry was ready to bet nobody had put a foot in it during the whole year.

He was currently weeding it. He sighed heavily, whipping the sweat on his forehead and trying to ignore his dry throat. He had been in the garden for four hours and today the weather was hot and dry, the type of day during which you want to stay under a tree while sipping a refreshing drink or maybe eating a ice cream.

As he was pulling out a not so co-operating weed, he felt a sharp pain behind his neck, it lasted only a few seconds. He looked around and saw a bee flying away.

"Great," he muttered, "even the bugs are against me."

He put a hand on his neck, cringing when he touch the spot where the bee must have stung him. He was trying to feel if the bug had let its sting, he was relieved to feel nothing. Shrugging, he dismissed the event and went back to work.

The hooded stranger was back on the hill, but this time he was escorted by two other people and was carrying a silver orb. He pushed something on it and the orb opened, releasing a shadow.

"Yeartha kren'yr Drak. Boreth Daryns an'll whukas, hos tur Drak'yr crihjl

vieth."

The shadow nodded and disappeared.

"They'll arrive today," announced the man to his companions.



For the following week, Harry continued to work in the garden. At the end of the week he had nearly finished his work there: he had cut the grass, weeded the whole area and planted new flowers here and there. All he had to do now was watering it.

His aunt, who had been watching him while cooking, for the past days to make sure he was working, opened the window and yelled.

"Boy! You'll have to paint the fence when you're done!"

Then she closed the window and went back to her kitchen. Harry sent a disgusted look her way. You could always rely on her to find him something to do.

Bracing himself he finished watering the flowers and went to take a paintbrush and some paint. The Dursley's had bought some brown paint. He started to work, careful not to drop anything on the ground. He was

half-way done when he started to have a light headache. He dismissed the feeling, he had been working for the whole afternoon in the sun, it was normal that he got a headache. But as time passed, it grew more and more

painful, especially behind his neck. The pain was now unbearable. His vision was blurred by his tears, his surroundings were spinning. He dropped the paintbrush to the ground, falling on his knees. Finally he passed out, the pain being too much to bear.

Harry slowly came back to his senses. His first feeling was that he wasn't lying on grass anymore. It looked like he was resting on a bed. His head was still hurting and didn't dare to open his eyes. Slowly he realized that

there were people in the room. They were talking.

"But how could this happen?!" This person was nearly hysterical.

"I don't know," replied a cold voice. "This has never happened before!"



"Could it be an error?"

"You saw the mark just like me, he has been chosen!"

"But, but, It's impossible! It can't be! A mere human can't be chosen!"

"Apparently it's possible, even if I doubt a human would be able to follow our training."

Harry could clearly hear the disgust and scorn in the way the second person pronounce the word 'human'.

"What are we going to do!"

"We'll give him a tour as soon as he wakes up as well as a few explanations, then we'll drop him in the choice room. Demenor will know what to do."

"You're sure, shouldn't we erase his memory and send him back to his world, he doesn't belong to our world!"

"We can't, he has the mark, he must be trained, even if I doubted he'll be able to do anything."

"Alright."

Harry slowly opened his eyes, looking around him. Apparently the two people weren't too keen on humans and he didn't look forwards talking with them.

"Finally you're awake." The cold voice said sharply.

Harry's vision was still a bit blurred. He blinked a few times and looked at the people next to him. His eyes widened in shock.

They were elves! The one with the cold voice was tall and muscular. He had shoulder-length black hair pulled in a ponytail and steel gray eyes. His companion was shorter with chestnut brown hair reaching his ears and hazel

eyes. Both had pointed shaped ears and a silver lock of hair.



The black-haired one sent him a hard look which confused Harry a bit, what

had he done to deserve it?

"Get up, human, we have a lot of thing to do, and no time to waste."

Harry obeyed immediately and followed them outside the room.

Translation:

"Yeartha kren'yr Drak. Boreth Daryns an'll whukas, hos tur Drak'yr lyan'yr

crihjl vieth.": "Salutations Dragon's spirit. Bring the youths in our care, for the Dragonmasters' history to go on."



## **Chapter One**

### First days

The two elves gave him a quick tour, barely speaking, no more than one or two words to him. Harry was really confused; not only by their behavior, but also by the situation. Where was he? Why? How? All these questions were swirling in his mind. He didn't dare to ask them, seeing the look on their faces. They showed him the headquarters, the apprentices' area where he would stay, the masters' one, the common room where they had their meals. The building was quite strange, there seemed to be no roof, and the walls were covered with plants. Then he was led outside and showed the fighting area, the paddocks and the training rooms. Finally they brought him back to the main building and stopped before a large door; it was made of steel and silver, with nine figures imprinted. Studying them closely, Harry noticed there were nine dragons. He looked expectantly at the two elves. The one with black hair faced him.

"Listen closely human." He paused, making sure he had Harry's complete attention. "You're here at the Dragonmasters' headquarters. In this room, each new apprentice is chosen by one of the masters who will become his or her surveyor. Each master is responsible for the apprentice until he or she is partnered. When you enter, you must stay silent. Don't speak if you're not spoken to."

Harry nodded.

"Well, let's go now."

He opened the doors and entered followed by his companion and Harry. The chatter in the room died as they walked in the room. All the eyes were fixed on them, or more precisely on Harry. He looked down, quite uncomfortable with all the attention he was getting. He noticed that the two elves had joined their friends. The silence was finally broken by a strong voice.

"Very well, now that we're all here, let's start the ceremony." Harry looked up at the speaker and met a pair of blue eyes, a bit like Dumbledore's except that these ones weren't twinkling at him. The



speaker looked older than all the other people present; he appeared to be the leader.

"Welcome Dragonlings, I'm Demenor, leader of this group. Now step forwards, and state your name so that you can be chosen."

Immediately, eleven youths, looking about Harry's age walked to the center of the room. Confused, Harry joined them.

The first to talk was a tall dark haired elf.

"I'm Teneb," It was clear that he was used to being obeyed.

Demenor turned to the masters.

"Does anyone accept Teneb as his Daryn?"

An elf raised his hand.

"I, Kario accept Teneb as my Daryn."

Teneb bowed.

"I, Teneb, swear obedience to Master Kario."

One by one, all the youths were chosen by a master. There were six elves: Teneb, Inir, Vlad, Xjahl, Malisa and Arnelle. The five remaining ones didn't look like anything Harry knew. All were human-like except for some details. Two of them had white hair and orange eyes. They also had only four fingers on their hands. They were Magis as Harry would soon learn. Magis were cousins of the elves but due to a prolonged contact with strong magic, their appearance had changed as well as their powers. Magis were able to manipulate magic flows. They were called Garth and Ophelia. The last three were Elementals. Like Magis, they were cousins of the elves but were divided in four groups recognizable by their appearance. One of the three youths, called Kobalt was obviously a Water Elemental, with his deep purple hair and his ocean blue eyes, the second; Ribor, was an Earth one, having dark green hair and hazel eyes. The last one, Chrisianne was an Air, with her silver gray locks and gray eyes. They all had very



pale, almost transparent skin. Finally, it was Harry's turn. He stepped forward and said, a bit shakily:

"I'm Harry."

"Does anyone accept Harry as his Daryn?"

Nobody answered, the room was dead silent.

Demonor asked his question again but this time more forcefully.

Harry looked around him, only meeting cold and defiant stares. He shifted on his feet, uncomfortably.

Finally, the silence was broken by a harsh voice,

"Don't bother repeating the question. Demenor, no of us want to take a weak human as our Daryn. He would only bring shame on us."

Demenor sighed at this, as if he had expected this reaction.

Harry was now looking at the floor truly hurt by these words.

"Well," said the elf. "As no one wishes to take you, human, I have no other choice but to take you myself."

Harry bowed, his cheeks burning with shame.

"I, Harry, swear obedience to Master Demenor."

There were a few seconds of silence, which were finally broken by the voice of Demenor.

"Alright, will the masters take their Daryns with them and explain a few things. I bid you good night." His voice clearly stated that they were being dismissed.

Only Harry and Demenor stayed in the room.

"Well, Harry, your situation is quite peculiar..." said the elf slowly.

Harry remained silent, not knowing what to say.



"Quite peculiar indeed .." he repeated. "I think you deserve an explanation."

Harry slowly nodded.

"Alright, you're here at the headquarters of the Dragonmasters. It's a group mostly composed of elves, also a few Magis and Elementals. Our principal characteristic is that we're all partnered with a dragon."

"A dragon?!" blurted Harry.

There was a faint smile on his lips.

"Yes a dragon, but not the ones you're used to seeing. These dragons are different, more intelligent and resourceful. They can speak telepathically and partnered with someone. There are nine types, broken into three groups: First, the mind dragons: they are the Azurean," a picture of a big azure dragon appeared. It was huge with silver claws, sharp small spikes on the head and the neck. Big spikes on the dark blue wings and razor-sharp blade on the legs as well as at the end of the tail. "These are the strongest most enduring in their group. Then the Dawnris" another picture followed these words. Large light red wings, a body colored in pastel tones from yellow to red, a crown of spikes on the head, small blades along the neck and the tail, ruby claws. This one was smaller than the Azurean. "Really fast, sharp reflexes and great memory. The last member of this group are the Duskers." Another picture showed up. It was the one of a small dragon covered with scales whose colors were either deep purple, dark blue or black. Its wings were a dark violet. It had two horns on the head, little spikes above the eyes, dark claws and round spikes on the tail. "Its principal advantage is his chameleon's abilities. This dragon can blend in his environment, thus making it difficult to identify them."

Demenor took a huge breath and looked at Harry who was starrng at the pictures.

"The second group is composed of the Elements' dragons: first the Firelans who had control over fire." A new picture appeared. It was quite a huge dragon. It was red and orange with two horns on its head. Its wing and the end of its tail were made of fire. "Then the



Dewats who controlled water." The dragon looked a lot like the Azurean, except he was smaller, had less spikes and that his body seemed made of water. "The third are the Wiscand who mastered the air." This dragon was quite strange. It was hard to described since his body seemed blurred. Its wings were transparent, he had two horns made of swirling air and white fluorescent eyes. "Wiscands are able to make themselves invisible. And the last ones, the Quear with control over earth." It was the biggest dragon Harry had ever seen. It seemed made of rock with massive legs and huge wings. Its body was covered with tiny spikes. Two blades were found at the end of his tail.

Demenor paused again.

Harry had never been so shocked.

"Finally the two last dragons. They're magical dragons. First the Enmags"

Harry was awestruck by the picture of this dragon. If he had to describe something magical it would be this. Huge silver wings, a slender creamy body which radiated magic, rainbow colored spark on his neck and tiny spikes above his head.

"Enmags are all females and powerful healers but they are also very rare. But the rarest are the Sowarocs."

He looked royal, like a chief, a leader. Huge golden wing with silver spikes, diamond-like scales. Huge claws, blades on the on the tail, neck and head. Sowarocs emanated power.

"The Sowarocs are the most powerful of dragons. They can control magic, are deadly fighters and almost immune to all types of spells."

Harry only nodded, completely shocked by the picture.

"Now onto another subject, you'll be trained for two years before being partnered. Your training consists of different areas of study: sword fights, close combat, martial arts, archery, horse back riding, mind magic, magic, including healing, tracking ... You and the other apprentices will be under the care of masters of each field. "



Harry nodded again.

"One last thing, as you know I am your surveyor but I'm also the leader of the Dragonmasters, so I'm really busy and I would appreciate it if you didn't come to me too often."

Once again Harry nodded.

"Good. I'll show you the Daryns' dorm. Follow me."

Harry was led to a black door.

"Here you are. Good night, and good luck with your training, you'll need it."

Before Harry could thank him, Demenor left. Harry dreaded the reaction of the others in the room. Bracing himself, he opened the door and entered.

He was met with a heavy silence and hard stares.

Biting his lip, he headed towards the only remaining bed, in the corner to his right, near the window. Silently he opened the bags finding some clothes, soap, ... He started to put them into the drawers under the bed, hearing the others talking in quiet whisper between them.

"I can't believe a human has been chosen!" said one of the Magis suddenly.

"Yes, I mean how could a weak human be partnered with a dragon?" added a blond-haired elf, Vlad.

"Did you know that they need sticks of wood to do magic?" asked the Earth Elemental, Ribor, playing along.

"Really?"

"Yes, pathetic isn't it? And I thought the trolls were stupid!"

"Well, humans might be the next step of their evolution..."



"I don't know... Why don't you ask the human?"

"Excellent idea. Hey human!"

Harry, who had acted like he was deaf, looked at the elf.

"Is your mother a troll?"

Harry clenched his fists but remained silent. They were baiting him but he wouldn't fall for their trap.

"What's the problem? Cat got your tongue?"

"Perhaps he is mute?" said the air Elemental, Chrisianne.

"Or too stupid? I mean if his mother was really a troll..."

They looked like they could go on for hours but Teneb cut them off.

"Finished? I think dinner is ready."

"Really, well let's going!" exclaimed another elf, Xjahl.

They left the room. Harry looked down at his hand. He had clenched his fists so tightly that he had cut himself. He forced himself to calm down, took a deep breath and exited the dorm, heading for the common room.

He sat at the far end of the table reserved for the apprentices.

Throughout the whole dinner, he remained silent, pretending not to hear the taunts of the other youths.

As soon as they were allowed to leave, he went straight to his dorm, changed and went to bed. He heard the others coming a few hours later and pretended to be sleeping. He had a hard time falling asleep. What had he done to deserve this treatment?

He was awakened by ice water in the morning. Completely drenched, shivering, he looked around and spotted a bucket hovering above him. Without warning it stopped hovering and fell right on his head. The shock made him a bit dizzy.



"Finally awake human?" asked Chrisianne with a fake smile.

"Hurry up Chris or we'll be late for breakfast!" shouted Garth.

"Coming!" yelled the young girl before looking back to Harry. "You should hurry human, or you'll be late..."

As soon as she left, he got up, dressed and ran to the common room. Everyone was nearly finished. He quickly ate his breakfast and headed to his first class, sword fighting.

He was the last one to arrive. Their master gave him a scornful look.

"Well as I said before, I'm Effilin and I'll be teaching you the art of fighting. I'm sure most of you," he glanced at Harry, "will be great. We'll start with sword-fighting. I'll give each of you a sword then show you some basic moves." In a few minutes they all had a blade in their hands. Harry was finding his to be really heavy. He had trouble lifting it.

"Now look at me," the elf said loudly before demonstrating a series of slow simple movements. He made them practice a few times, correcting and praising them one by one. He seemed particularly keen on Teneb who was moving with ease, apparently used to holding a sword. Then, he reached Harry as he was executing the series for the fifth time. His arms were growing tired from carrying the sword and he was panting.

"Well, too heavy for you?"

Harry didn't know what to say.

"A little..."

"A little! But a baby could hold this sword! And your balance is horrible, look!" To prove his point Effilin gave him a good push on the shoulder, sending him on the ground.

"No balance, no strength... What am I going to do with you?"

The other youths were snickering at this.



"Give me this sword back, you're not worthy to hold it yet."

Without a word, Harry handed him the blade. The elf put it back on the wall and took a long stick of wood on which he put two rings of steel.

"Take this, and practice with it. At least you won't hurt yourself or anybody else ..."

Garth was mimicking Harry behind the teacher's back.

Effilin went back to the front of the apprentices.

"Well, All of you but the human can practice these movements against each other. You," he said looking at Harry, "you continue to practice alone."

This went on for two hours. Then they headed outside for their archery lesson.

This didn't go well for Harry either, he was exhausted from his first lesson and his arm was shaking, making him miss the targets by meters and earning the anger of Edevia the elf teacher.

Lunch passed quickly and then the first lesson of Magic, the one Harry was looking forward to.. At least he wouldn't be far behind this time. He had only forgot one thing: his wand.

As soon as he stepped into the class with his wand in his hand, he found Sarwin in front of him d glaring at him. The Magis snatched his wand away.

"Forget it human. There won't be any wand waving in this class. We'll be learning about true Magic."

The lesson was torture for Harry. He couldn't do anything, having never learned how to channel his power without a wand. Wandless magic was supposed to be impossible! At the end of the lesson, Sarwin gave him his wand back, warning Harry to keep it in his dorm.



The next period was about mind Magic. The first step in this process was accessing to the spirit plan. The only way was meditating as their teacher, Nerthor had explained them. The ability to keep calm in all the situations was necessary for a dragon's partner. The dragon had a tendency to be overwhelmed by their emotions, so the partner had to keep a cool head to balance this rush of feeling. Apparently the elves, Magis and Elementals use a particular way to meditate and fall in a deep trance. The problem was that it had no effect on Harry. He spent the two hours trying to figure out another way to meditate, failing miserably. Finally he met his last teacher, Lienhior, who was teaching them how to ride a horse. If it was possible, this was the worst hour of the day for Harry. As soon as he said he had never ridden before, he earned the teacher's scorn.

Finally it was over. Harry quickly ate and went straight to bed after nursing his many bruises .

The next days followed the same pattern, and after a week, Harry realized he wasn't welcome by anyone here. His comrades were divided into two groups: one group, composed of Inir, Malisa, Arnelle, Teneb, Opheria and Kobalt, was simply ignoring him, acting like he didn't exist. The others loved to taunt and insult him. It was their favorite game and the teachers acted like nothing was happening.

He hadn't improved in any of his classes. In fighting he still practiced with his stick or was used by Effilin for demonstrations, meaning that he would act as a punching-bag. His aim improved but Edevia was ignoring him. Magic was still impossible and the teacher was ready to throw him out. Mind Magic wasn't any better. In horse riding class he had been declared a hopeless case. Add to this the nightly nightmares about Voldemort, Cedric, tortures...

All in all his life was a real hell. And the future wasn't looking any better

Harry was quietly eating, ignoring the taunts from Garth and his friends. He was getting used to it. He was amazed with their ability to come up with new insults every day.

A ringing was heard above the chatter. Demenor rose on his feet.



"Daryns, it's a tradition among us to celebrate the end of the first month you have spent with us. So a feast will be held in your honor in one week."

He sat back among the cheers.

Harry was quite happy about it too.

The following week was spent talking about the feast. Even the teachers were more lenient.

On the night of the feast, the youths were gathered in the dorms, getting ready for it. Ten minutes before the feast, they began to leave the room. As Harry was about to leave too, he felt someone grab his arm.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"To the feast, Ribor." Harry replied simply, having recognized Ribor's voice.

"Really? You really thought you were going to be able to come? How thick can you be?"

Harry looked at him confused.

"The little human doesn't understand... Let me explain in simple terms: You are not coming."

"I don't see a reason which could stop me from going"

"Well, there isn't any, but you won't go."

"Why?"

"Listen, human, you're nothing but a burden. You'll only bring shame upon us by coming. Who do you think will be happy to see you tonight?"

Harry looked down . Ribor had hit a nerve and knew it.

"See?" he said, smirking. "Good night human."



Harry slowly undressed and lay on his bed. A lonely tear rolled down his cheek. He missed Hogwarts, his friends, he even missed Snape; at least he knew why Snape hated him. He slowly fell into an agitated sleep.

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## **Chapter Two**

### **Drastic Choices**

Harry was quietly resting on his bed. He could hear the noise coming from the party held in the common room. A lonely tear fell on his cheek followed by a second. Christmas party... It had been six months since he arrived there, six long months... He could hear the laughter, the music, it only made him more depressed. This wasn't the first party he was kept away from, in fact he had never been allowed to come to any parties, ceremonies... The past few months came back to his mind: the humiliations during the lessons...

### **Flashback**

He was in Efillin's lesson, listening and trying to be as discreet as possible while doing his best to imitate the master with his stick. Apparently this wasn't enough as the elf called him to the front.

"Well, let's see if you improved from being hopeless to being really bad."

In a few seconds, Harry was on his back on the floor.

"Well, I have to rephrase my sentence. You're not hopeless, you're way beyond hopeless."

The other students were laughing at him.

Harry was looking at his feet, his cheeks red with shame and embarrassment.

"Go back to try to improve if it's possible. At least be useful and shine the swords in the box."

Silently, under the laughter, Harry walked to the back of the room and started to shine the weapons.

### **End of Flashback**

There has been this time in Nerthor's class too...



## Flashback

Harry had been trying for the hundredth time to access the trance in order to reach the spirit plane, which was the goal of this course. Once a student reached the plane, he could meet his spirit guardian and receive advice. The shape of the spirit depended of the personality of the student. It was a common thing among the students to try to guess this shape. Bets were made on that. Harry was aware that the others were joking about what his guardian would be: some said it would be a worm, others a goldfish...

"Human!" snapped the teacher.

Harry winced and sighed. Another lecture, how marvelous!

"I wonder what you are doing here. I've never seen someone less skilled than you! I'm wondering if it doesn't have anything to do with your mind. A three-year old child would be able to enter a simple trance, yet you are unable to do the easiest thing. Well, as teaching you seems to be a lost cause, I'll give you something else to do. Take these quills and copy down these manuscripts. Even you could be able to do this correctly."

As Harry walked slowly to a table, carrying the parchments, he wished with his entire mind that the ground could open and eat him, hiding him from them.

## End of the Flashback.

In reality, all his masters weren't teaching him anymore. Each time, after about fifteen minutes, they threw him some snide remarks, pointed out his uneasiness, his clumsiness and gave him other things to do, in general hard and dirty work or boring tasks. Lienhior made him clean the stables, Edevia used him to paint targets, refurnish her wood stocks or make arrows. In Sarwin's class, like in Nerthor's he had to copy thick manuscripts, old and dusty parchments. At least there, he was learning something. He might not be able to use magic or mind power but he knew probably more curses, hexes and theories about these subjects than all the students put together.

Added to this, there were the taunts, the insults,...



"Ignore him, he's just a human."

"Is the little human crying? Oh! Poor little human! Go back where you belong!"

"Weak..."

"Useless..."

"Idiot..."

"Oh! Ignore him, he's too stupid to understand."

"You're a good for nothing!"

"I don't understand why I waste my time with you anyway!..."

"You clumsy fool!"

"You'll never do anything right! You're only a danger and a burden!..."

Danger, burden, these words echoed in his ear. He closed his eyes, preventing more tears to follow the first two.

His thoughts drifted to Hogwarts which was not a good thing since it only increased his feeling of loneliness and coldness.

He hadn't felt that cold before a comment of Xjahl a few days ago...

### Flashback

Teneb and Kobalt were quietly discussing at a table in a corner of the dorm. Harry was lying on his bed, lost in his thoughts. The door opened and Xjahl walked to them. Soon they were talking about the upcoming Christmas and what they would probably receive from their families. Then Xjahl spotted Harry and smirked before saying loudly.

"At least we'll get gifts, won't we?"

As Harry hadn't reacted, still thinking deeply and having not heard his comment, Xjahl taunted him.



"Tell me human, what will your friends give you?"

Silence answered him. This time, Harry had heard him but had found quickly that ignoring them was the best way to deal with the taunts.

"Boy am I stupid!" exclaimed the young elf. "You don't have friends, I had forgotten!"

Harry remained expressionless. He had learned to do it after spending two months there. His face was now a cold mask, rarely showing any feelings.

Xjahl seemed disappointed at this lack of reaction and dropped the subject. But he had hit a nerve and his remarks had truly hurt the young boy.

### End of the Flashback

His friends... He missed them more than anything else.

They should be partying in the great Hall now. He could picture the icicles, the candles, the trees brought in and decorated by Hagrid, the food, the laughter... Ron and Hermione should be bickering at the Gryffondor table as usual, George and Fred should be plotting another prank or experimenting a new invention on a poor first year... He could see the professors at their table: McGonagall, as strict as ever, Dumbledore with his twinkling blue eyes, Snape, surely scowling... Sirius and Remus were probably on some sort of mission... He would give anything to see them again, even Snape and Malfoy... He pushed these thoughts away. He was only making himself feel more depressed than he already was. He closed his eyes and slowly drifted to sleep; but dreams weren't any better than reality...

He was walking on the grounds of Hogwarts. The scene was peaceful: blue sky, sun, and birds chirping. Harry could hear the laughter of the Hogwarts' students in the background. He headed for the Quidditch pitch. There, the scenery suddenly changed. Gone were the birds, the sun. The sky was now a dull gray, and thunder could be heard. He looked around, seeing tombstones sprouting everywhere.



"Kill the spare." hissed someone behind him.

He spun around, meeting the red eyes of a smirking Voldemort.

"Harry Potter... The murderer is back?"

Harry took a step backward.

"I'm not a murderer!" he said but his tone wasn't that confident.

"Really?" whispered the Dark Lord. "Then how do you explain that?"

He stepped aside, revealing the body of Cedric, lying on the floor. But it wasn't the body Harry had brought back with him, it was rotten flesh, with hollow holes instead of eyes.

"No... no..." Harry was stepping backward, shaking his head, his eyes fixed on what was remaining of the Hufflepuff seeker.

To his great horror, the body started to get up slowly and shakily. The holes in his face were lit with red fire. He started to stumble towards Harry.

"Harry..."

"Cedric?"

"Why? Why did you kill me?"

"I DIDN'T!"

"Why Harry? Why?"

"No, this is not true!"

"Isn't it?" hissed Voldemort "Are you sure? And what about them?"

More people started to appear: all the families he had seen being tortured and killed through his dreams for the past months.

A young girl, about five-year old, her teddy bear in her arms, was looking at him with a frown.



"Why?"

She was followed by an old man, a young lady, a mother... They circled him, asking him why he had killed them.

Harry put his hands over his ears trying to block their voices, but to no avail.

"Please, stop it, I didn't mean to... I couldn't do anything... I'm sorry... please, stop..." he muttered.

Slowly their figures faded, and once again the scenery changed. He was back at Hogwarts, in the Great Hall to be precise, but the happy atmosphere of the school was gone. He could only feel coldness, a coldness which penetrated every fiber of his body and mind. The whole staff and student body were staring at him. Dumbledore stood up with a grim face.

"Mr. Potter, you're charged of the murder of a fellow student, Cedric Diggory, therefore you are being expelled from this school. You must leave in less than an hour."

Harry wanted to speak, to claim his innocence, but his voice was gone. He heard loud shouts around him.

"Murderer!"

"Traitor!"

The Gryffindors were staring at him with hateful glance. Ron and Hermione looked at him with spite and loathing.

"You're no longer a Gryffindor, you're not worth more than a Death Eater," said Ron.

"We were your friends, and that's how you repay us! You left us at his mercy! Killer!" shouted Hermione, slapping him.

The doors burst opened and Fudge, followed by two Aurors entered.



"Harry Potter, you have been found guilty of the murder of Cedric Diggory and sentenced to be given the Kiss." The Minister announced.

A hooded person entered the room and Harry's mind was filled with the cries of his parents. The Dementor approached him. Harry couldn't move; his feet seemed to be rooted to the floor.

Slowly a skeletal hand grabbed his wrist and pulled him closer while the other one was lowering the hood a bit. Harry then saw a large black hole instead of the mouth. The hole was dragging him and he fell in it, screaming, spinning in the darkness, words echoing around him:

"Traitor!"

"Liar!"

"Murderer!"

It was like a chant that followed him in the darkness until he felt nothing more...

Harry bolted upright on his bed, sweating and breathing heavily. It had been a nightmare... The words were still echoing in his head... "Murderer... Killer..." He felt disgusted with himself. It was true. He had abandoned them when they needed him. And there he was, lying on a bed, doing nothing useful. Too stupid to learn anything, too cowardly to stand up to his fellow students, too weak to be of real help in the fight... a burden, a useless burden who only endangered other people. He only hurt those he was close to... But it would end soon...

This thought surprised him but thinking about it he started to see its advantages... It would solve everything and nobody would miss him. Hermione, Ron, Sirius and all the others at Hogwarts must surely have gotten over his disappearance, and this way he wouldn't endanger them more. The Dursleys would be happy to get rid of him, as would the masters and the riders here. Dementors had forgotten about him. Harry knew this. The leader was so busy he had completely forgot about his young apprentice, not that he wanted a



human apprentice or a even normal apprentice, as far as Harry knew. Nobody would miss him... His decision was taken.

Slowly, he got up, put an illusion on the bed with his wands, making it look like he was sleeping. Then he opened one of his drawers and pulled out a knife. He had taken it one night after dinner. It wasn't a big knife, but it was sharp enough for what he had in mind. He took his cloak and wrapped it around his shoulder. Quietly, he sneaked out of the dorm and headed towards the doors. He decided to leave through the door in the kitchen. Nobody would be there at that time. The cooks and their assistants were at a party thrown for them and those who kept the place clean and took care of the people and animals here. Silently he walked and in a few minutes he was outside.

The cold of the night made him shivered and he tightened the cloak around him. He could feel the knife in one of his pockets. He walked slowly, not really knowing where to go. The snow was making his progression difficult, but he didn't give up. He heard the rush of the sea against the cliffs. The Headquarters of the Dragonmasters was situated on an island, lost in the middle of an ocean, and he didn't really know where it was. He made up his mind and he headed for the south side of the island. Once there, he looked at the stars and positioned himself in the exact direction of Hogwarts.

Then in a slow motion, he pulled out the knife and looked at the sharp blade. With determination, he placed it on his left wrist and sliced it in a quick swift stroke. He rapidly sliced his right one too and looked up at the stars. Maybe his parents were waiting for him there. His blood was freely falling on the snow, making a small dark red pool at his feet. He felt weaker and weaker from the blood loss. His mind was drifting away. He fell on his knees; not able to stand up anymore. He finally laid on his back, his eyes fixed on the stars. Slowly his eyelids fell too, obscuring his view and he fell into welcome darkness...

What did you think of it?

Let me know!

Thanks to all the reviewers: mooneater; Melanie; Phoenix of Light; Erica; ?; usakoesm; mc nugget; Kathleen; chibi-chan; coconut-ice agent h/h; Helen; silverspirit; MysticSorceror; Phoenix Flight; Kelly;



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## **Chapter Three**

### Sowarocs

Harry felt himself being engulfed in welcome darkness. He didn't feel anything. No pain, no joy, just nothing. But suddenly he felt a tug in his navel, like he was being transported by a portkey and his surroundings started to lighten, slowly become blinding white. After the few minutes it took his eyes to adjust to the light, he started to look around him. It seemed like he was on a cloud. If this was heaven, he was quite happy to be there.

He suddenly heard a flapping behind him and turned sharply to look at what was making that sound. His jaw nearly hit the 'ground' --if there was any.

A dragon was flying towards him, a Sowaroc to be precise. But he was silver instead of the normal colors. The beast landed near Harry and stared right at him, making him really uncomfortable.

It was stupid!, the dragon stated, looking strictly at the teen.

Harry only gaped at him, too surprised to even register what he had just said.

This was probably one of the most foolish things to do!, continued the dragon. He was clearly angry with Harry.

Harry snapped back to reality. He was in Heaven and he wasn't there to be shouted at. He'd gotten enough of that at the Headquarters.

"What?" he replied, curtly.

What were you thinking? Slicing your wrist! Did you want to kill yourself?

Harry raised his left eyebrow. Was he joking or just being stupid?

"That was the point!" he snapped back, clearly angry at the dragon.

I know that!



"Then, why are you asking?"

To get a point!

"Which is?"

My! Aren't we curious?!

"No, just wondering why I am being bothered by a dragon with an anger management problem, while I'm supposed to be dead and resting in peace forever..."

Why do I always get the difficult ones? The huge beast sighed, rolling his eyes in a very human-like way.

Harry remained silent. The dragon was getting on his nerves.

The Sowaroc gave an exasperated sigh again.

Well, lets get a few things straight: first, you're not dead...

"WHAT!"

I'd like you not to interrupt me... As I was saying you're not dead and...

"Sorry, I must have misunderstood what you have just said. I think I heard 'you're not dead'?"

You. Are. Not. Dead, the dragon repeated forcefully.

There was a silence, then...

"(censored)"

Language, language

"Oh shut up! You've basically told me I'm going back to Hell and you'd like me to be fine and happy about it? Are you out of your mind?! You don't know what my life is like there!"

I know exactly how it's like for you! I'm not your guardian for nothing!



"Really, and how would you... you're my what?!"

Me doth think you have a few hearing problems. I'm your guardian.

Harry stared at the Sowaroc. After a few minutes, he seemed to break from his shock state.

"Alright, where's the camera?"

The dragon gave him a confused look.

The what?

"The camera, you know this thing muggles use to record films."

I know what a camera is!

"You sure know a lot of things." Replied Harry, but he shut up, seeing the look on the Sowaroc's face.

To come back to our subject, I'm your guardian and...

"Er... sorry to interrupt you again, but I believe there is a small mistake there. You can't be my guardian."

And why not?

" Well, I can't have a guardian. To have one, you need to reach the spirit plane and find one; and I'm unable to reach the plane, so I can't have a guardian."

You being to be able to reach the plane would have been quite surprising, seeing what your so called masters taught you, the dragon snorted.

"Care to elaborate?" Harry asked, with a raised eyebrow.

Well, you're a human.

"Brilliant, you noticed!"



Don't take that tone with me!, snapped the dragon. Anyway, as I was saying, since you're a human, you can't use the same method as the elves to reach the plane, it's technically impossible! Elvish and human minds aren't identical!

"Great, and so?"

You're really thick, you know. It means that with the proper training, you can develop your own abilities.

"Wonderful." Replied Harry sarcastically. "And how was I supposed to learn that?"

Well, I was planning to appear to you, but since you tried to kill yourself, my plans have been changed a bit. It was quite a stupid thing to do, completely useless and inappropriate.

"I found it quite appropriate, thank you."

Well, we haven't much time left before you wake up, so I'm going to show you how to reach the plane. After this I'll be able to talk with you.

"Something I'm not sure I should be happy about," Harry muttered quietly.

This way, I'll be able to help with your training, continued the dragon, apparently not having heard Harry's comment.

At the word "training", Harry's ears perked up.

"Training?"

No, painting!, snorted the Sowaroc. Of course training!

"But I don't think I'm the best person to be trained."

Nonsense. Now listen carefully. To reach the plane you need to...

The dragon started to explain in every detail the method to reach the plane.



He explained to Harry that the elves had a very strong link with nature. They had to link with it, and after relaxing and calming their minds, they used its power and through it, accessed the plane. Then they had to pierce its mists, stabilizing the plane. They would find their guardian only once this was done.

As Harry was a human, he said, he didn't have these links, so instead of trying to draw his mind out into the nature's power which he couldn't access (for now at least), he had to dive into the depths of his mind, to focus inside him on his inner power, locate its origin, and use it to reach the plane. Once there, he had to adjust his mind to the plane. To put it simply, he had to clear his mind--not calm himself, which was quite different.

He started to try to do this, under the careful watch of the dragon. To make him practice, the Sowaroc took him into another plane and made him return to the spirit plane. After a few failed attempts, he quickly got the hang of it and could now do it with ease in a few seconds.

Suddenly he shivered.

Apparently, you're finally waking up

"But I don't want to!"

Sorry, but I don't think it's something we can control.

"But..."

No but. Anyway I expect you tomorrow at 4 a.m sharp. Be outside for this.

"4 A.M! Are you crazy?!"

I'm perfectly sane thank you. But we can't have you untrained. You must learn to have control over your abilities.

"Yeah, whatever."

The plane started to fade before Harry's eyes.



Remember, tomorrow at 4 A.M!" yelled the dragon.

"Hey! You didn't tell me your name!"

Arxeren!, shouted the Sowaroc, before disappearing.

Harry opened his eyes slowly, groaning. The light was blinding him. He closed his eyes, shielding them from the light. He smelled salt, but also the sea. He could hear the rush of the sea against the cliff. The dragon was right, he was alive. Sighing, he opened his eyes again and after adjusting them to his surroundings, he looked around him, trying to see where he was.

*I'm in a cave.* These were his first thoughts. He was in a cave, probably dug in the cliff. There was a large opening through which the light was coming.

You're awake, young one, said someone behind him. The voice was deep but at the same time soft.

He turned on his heel and came face to face with a Sowaroc! But this time it was a real one and a very impressive one. His head nearly touched the ceiling, which meant he was nearly eight meters high. His gold color was nearly throbbing with power. His silver blades and diamond claws were shining in the light. This creature was breathtaking, the embodiment of beauty and perfection, but also deadly.

"Why am I alive?" asked Harry out of the blue. He didn't care if he was rude to the dragon he wanted to know why he was back.

I healed you when I found you last night. But I must say I thought you were going to die. You had lost a lot of blood.

Harry sighed.

"Why couldn't you just let me die?"

A great destiny is waiting for you.



"Probably as the worst student ever seen in the Headquarters! Or the first one being expelled, something I'm sure everyone would be happy about."

Stop wallowing in self-pity. Explore your abilities, train them, work harder, the dragon cut in.

"You're the second one to tell me this, but how could I be able to do it? Everyone I know would most likely go eat a flobberworm than help me with my training."

You have a brain, use it. Moreover you won't be alone.

"Ah yes, the insane spirit guardian! I forgot about him. But how will a spirit train me?"

You'll see, little one.

"But..."

You can do it, I know it.

"You're quite optimistic! I'm not strong enough! This!" there he showed up his wrist where a thin red line could be seen, "should prove you your wrong!"

Be more confident, young one.

"It's not that easy! I'm alone....," said Harry quietly.

You're not alone, people are watching you, you just need to learn to see them.

"I won't manage it."

The Sowaroc looked closely at him.

Give me your hand.

Harry obeyed.



The dragon lowered his head at his hand's level. The young boy could feel his breath. Contrary to what he had believed, it didn't smell like sulfur or fire. He couldn't name it but it was calming and relaxing. His hand glowed and when the light faded, and he saw a necklace in it. He took a good look at it: it was an oblong pendant with something engraved on it: a flying dragon in all its majesty. He looked up at the dragon, taking a deep breath.

"I can't accept it, it-it's too much."

The eyes of the dragon locked with his, their rainbow colors hypnotizing Harry.

Take it. It's made out of one of my scales. This way you will never really be alone.

Almost not daring to, Harry slowly put it around his neck. As it lay on his chest when he hid it under his shirt, Harry could feel a warm feeling passing through him at the contact. He looked up at the mighty beast with a tear in his eyes.

"Thank you, you don't know what it means to me."

Harry was so taken by his joy that he missed the small glow that surrounded the pendant for a few seconds. But the Sowaroc didn't. He gave the boy before him a sharp look.

You must leave now, young one.

Harry headed out of the cave. On his right, he saw stairs leading to the top of the cliff. Before exiting the cave he stopped and turned back.

"Wait, what's your name?"

You'll know when we'll meet again, young one. Now go, before your absence is noticed by your *teachers*, He somehow spat the word.

"Please don't tell them anything, it would only make things worse," pleaded Harry, feeling the dragon might report what he had done to someone, maybe Demenor. The elf had forgotten all about him,



proving his true interest for the boy. Harry didn't want to have him reminded of it.

The dragon eyed him for a long moment before nodding reluctantly.

Agreed, young one. Now go.

"Good bye, and thank you." replied Harry in a whisper before leaving.

Once he was alone, the dragon muttered quietly:

We'll meet again, young Harry Potter.

Harry ran to the Headquarters, hoping against hope that nobody would notice that he hadn't been in his dorm for the entire night.

He wasn't so lucky. As he was running down a corridor, he bumped into someone.

"Hey! Watch where you're going. ... You!" yelled the person he had just nearly knocked out.

To his luck, it was Effilin.

"What are you doing here? Running in the corridors! I'll teach you!" he ranted.

Harry didn't even bother to listen to him. He knew the best way to deal with the sword master was to remain silent and wait for him to finish his lecture.

"... And if you're so energetic that you can run this early in the morning, then you're going to have to clean the whole fighting room today. I want it to be spotless. And I don't care that it's Christmas!" he shouted.

By now a score of riders and a few students had gathered around them. All were smirking at Harry, apparently happy to see him in trouble.

Harry nodded carelessly and walked away.



"Hey! I'm not finished! Human!" yelled a red Effilin.

But Harry didn't take notice of it. Too many thoughts were swirling in his mind and he would deal with the consequences later. In a few minutes he was in his dorm. Nobody was there, all were in the common room enjoying Christmas morning.

Harry clutched his necklace tightly and for the first time in months he smiled a true smile.

Meanwhile panic was spreading in the wizarding world.

Harry's disappearance wasn't noticed before the middle of August when the Weasleys, worried by Harry's lack of answers to their mail, had come to get him out of the house of his relatives.

The Dursleys, quite happy to see him gone, didn't try to find where he had left to or who had took him away. They only realized they were rid of him, something they were glad for. Worry was the last of the things in their mind. Only Petunia was a bit angry at his disappearance because he had left before finishing his work, leaving the paintbrushes on the floor and dropping paint on the grass.

When the Weasleys arrived, this time by car, the Dursleys panicked.

Ron rang at the door, quite worried. Harry hadn't replied to his letters for a few weeks.

The door opened slowly, revealing a smiling Petunia. Her smile disappeared as soon as she saw who was standing on her doorstep, replaced by a look of pure panic.

Before she could close the door, Ron had blocked the door.

"Sorry to come like this, Mrs. Dursley," said Hermione, who had come with him, "but we need to speak with Harry."

"W-Who?" stuttered Petunia Dursley.

"Harry Potter."



"There is nobody by this name living here, now leave before I call the police."

"Don't play with us." replied Mr. Weasley, who had approached his son and friend. "You know Harry. Now let us enter and take him with us."

Petunia was about to answer, when Vernon's voice was heard behind her.

"Who is it, Petunia?" he asked.

"People. They're here for Him." She said shakily.

Vernon immediately joined his wife. He eyed Mr. Weasley disdainfully.

"The boy doesn't live here anymore," he said, smirking.

Mr. Weasley, Ron and Hermione paled.

"What do you mean?" asked the grown wizard hurriedly.

"He disappeared weeks ago. Pfu! Gone! Good riddance it was." Replied the beefy man.

This wasn't what Hermione and her companions had expected.

Their faces were now deadly pale.

"He disappeared?" repeated Ron.

"Are you stupid? The boy left. I don't know how or where or with who, but he's gone! Now leave my house!" he yelled.

With that he slammed the door. Hermione, Ron, and his father went whiter, panic visible on their faces.

"We must go to Hogwarts," stated Mr. Weasley.

The two youths were too shocked to say anything, so they nodded dumbly and left.



Once Dumbledore learned what had happened, it only took a few days before the wizarding world knew about it. It was in the newspapers, headlines like 'The Boy-Who-Lived Disappeared!' or 'Potter Kidnapped!' could be seen. The craziest hypotheses were made. A world scale search was made, but no clues were found. Panic followed. People started to believe in the return of the Dark Lord. Fudge tried to cover it, saying that the Potter boy must have had this thing planned, that You-Know-Who wasn't back. But only a few believed him; most followed Dumbledore's lead.

After a few weeks, as the students boarded the Hogwarts Express, everyone waited for Harry to show up, hoping against hope that he would come. But he never came. During the ride, Hermione had to restrain Ron from punching Malfoy as the young blond came to their compartment, making snide comments about Harry's disappearance. It was with a depressed mind that Hermione and the others entered the Great Hall. All the Gryffindors were looking sad, silent, and lost, even the twins. The sorting took place in a heavy atmosphere as all the houses, except Slytherin were worried for their comrade.

At the end, Dumbledore stood up, starting his speech.

"... And I ask you to keep in mind the name of one of your fellow student absent today. Let us hope he is well."

And everyone could nearly hear "and that he is not in Voldemort's clutches" in his mind.

All in all it wasn't a good start of the year for Hogwarts' students... well, most of them.

What did you think of it?

Let me know!

Thanks to all who reviewed, you're the best!

Naia



## **Chapter Four**

### Training

Christmas marked a change in Harry's life. From this day on, everything was different. Sure, his teachers and comrades' attitudes remained the same, but *he* had changed. Helped by his guardian, he took his training into his own hands. Each morning, from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m., and each night from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m., he trained: physical training in the morning, magical during the night. Arxeren kept him busy, therefore keeping him from wallowing in self-pity. The spirit guardian might be a little crazy but he was quite a good teacher. He followed Harry step by step throughout his work, advising him and correcting him.

First, he decided that Harry should have more endurance and be fitter. His answer to this problem was a two-hour workout in the morning: jogging, stretching, gymnastics... The jogging part wasn't as difficult as was the stretching one, but gymnastics was another story. The first time Arxeren showed him the moves he would have to do, he thought the guardian was joking.

### Flashback.

Now, time for gymnastics! exclaimed Arxeren.

Harry, who was panting on the ground, groaned.

Must you be so energetic this early in the morning?

Harry, I'd like to see more enthusiasm on your part.

Enthusiasm? right, more like madness.

Maybe, but in this case, I should tell you that you have to be quite crazy if you're arguing with yourself.

Technically, you're not a part of myself.

... That's not the point. Now look. This is what I want you to do.



Pictures of men doing flips and jumps passed before Harry's mind. Once it stopped, there was a small silence.

I have only one question, said Harry. What are you thinking?! Are you alright? Do you want to rest for a moment?

I'm sane, how many times do I have to tell you this? I. Am. Fine.

"Doesn't look like you are..." muttered Harry.

Harry could practically picture the scowling guardian in his mind. Arxeren couldn't come into his plane, so the spirit guardian was following him mentally and giving him instructions through mental pictures.

I heard that!

Well, it's true! How do you want me to do these things?

Oh, shut up and do it!

How?

DO IT!

Alright, alright! No need to get violent!

...

Harry sighed and tried to imitate one of the simplest moves he had just seen. He ended painfully on his back.

See! I told you I couldn't do it.

I have only three words: training, training and training.

That's one word, you know?

I know it's one word, so stop talking and try this. He showed Harry a simple move.

You know we could just skip this part, it's not like I will improve...



Harry...

Yes?

Shut up.

You are talking.

For the last time...

And if you are, I don't see why I shouldn't.

I'm warning you...

It's not really fair if you can talk and I can't.

**SHUT UP AND WORK!**

Alright! Don't get so worked up!

Harry started to practice some basic moves while muttering about a stupid guardian with an anger management problem...

End of the Flashback.

Slowly, he improved. He became fitter, more enduring, and more agile. Once Arxeren thought he was ready he started to teach him combat. Sword fighting was quite difficult at first since Harry rapidly grew tired of holding the sword. But little by little his skills improved. To train he used a sword he had managed to bring out of Effilin's room. It was an old and heavy weapon but well made. He also used a stolen bow and arrows to practice archery, but he was still feeling like he had two left hands. Something, said Arxeren, which was linked to the fact this bow wasn't adapted to him. His liking for sword fighting started on a precise day...

Flashback.

Harry had missed his target for the hundredth time that morning and was getting fed up with it. He was ready to throw his bow at the first person he saw.



Alright, stop, you can't continue like this.

You're giving up? Already?

Stop talking nonsense... replied the guardian. I'm going to have you get some appropriate weapons.

And how?

You'll see. Be here tonight at 9 and be ready to spend the night and following ones up. To make up for this, you won't have training for the time it'll last.

What?

Surprise!

I don't know if I really want to find out.

You'll like it.

That's why it's scaring me.

Enough talking! Go work on your knife throwing. Your aim wasn't accurate last time.

Great, replied Harry, grimacing. He wasn't any better at knife throwing than at archery.

Once he was finished with his morning training, he went to his classes.

The day passed slowly, and finally he headed for the place where he trained at night. It was a small cabin one kilometer away from the Headquarters. Harry had stumbled upon it during one of his morning runs and had been using it for storage since then. Before placing anything in it, he had cast numerous wards, protections and disillusionment charms on it to prevent any members of the Headquarters entering it. Once there, he sat on the ground and waited.



Minutes passed and nothing happened. Shifting a bit, he started to list the potions ingredients needed for an invisibility draught.

Time passed and still nothing. Getting a bit restless and annoyed at the wait, he decided to go to the other plane and ask his guardian.

# Arxeren?

There was no answer.

Arxeeeeerrreeeeen

Still no answer.

ARXEREN!

Yes?! What is this yelling about? Can't you speak like a normal person?

Since when am I normal?

Well... it doesn't matter! You didn't have to yell! I'm not deaf.

No, you're insane.

Am not.

Are too.

Am not.

Are too.

Am not.

Are too.

Am not.

Are not.

Am too.



Yes!!

I hate it when you trick me, said Arxeren dejectedly.

Get used to it.

Arrogant twit...

You're one to talk!

Back to the subject at hand, you should go back to your plane. Someone should be there to explain everything to you.

I've been waiting for ages and nobody has come.

He was a bit delayed, but he should have arrived by now."

Alright, see you later!

Harry came back to his plane quickly.

Indeed, somebody else was now present in the cabin. To say Harry was surprised was an understatement: there was a dwarf standing before him.

He was about 1.2 meters high, dressed in leather with an axe hanging at his side. He had small eyes, and a few scars crossed his face; his short brown hair was messy and partially blocked his view. He pushed some of his bangs aside, clearing his vision in a quick motion of the hand, before eyeing Harry from head to toe.

"So you're the one who needs weapons?"

"Y-yes," stuttered Harry, quite nervous.

"Right, come on, we don't have time to waste talking."

Harry grumbled a bit as he followed the dwarf. After all, he wasn't the one who was late!

The dwarf led him towards a hill and after a half-an-hour walk, he knelt on the ground and opened a trap door. Harry's eyes widened.



He would have never guessed something was hidden there, even if he had come here quite often for his training. The door had to be magical--there wasn't any other explanation for an entrance to be disguised that perfectly. A hole was now visible, but Harry couldn't see where it led as no lights were lightening it.

As Harry was lost in his thoughts, the dwarf snapped him back to reality.

"Come on, we don't have time to waste."

They stepped inside the hole, and ended in a tunnel lit by fluorescent stones.

"Follow me closely, it's easy to get lost here, and I don't have time to give you a tour."

Harry nodded and obeyed. He didn't want to get lost in those tunnels.

They walked for a few minutes before entering a huge cavern. Four huge fires were roaring and a few dwarves were busying themselves around them. Loud sounds of hammers hitting red-hot metal echoed in the cave. Sparks flew each time the metal was hit, and steam was shooting in the air as newly made weapons were cooled down in large basins. Harry's eyes were darting from one dwarf to another, his mind a bit dizzy from all the activity going on there. Sweat started to roll down his back as the atmosphere of the cave was stifling.

"Well, I'm going to show you how to make your weapons and how to take care of them. Listen attentively, I won't repeat my explanations."

Harry nodded again and listened to his guide.

First, the dwarf, Terio, showed him how to choose the right materials: he taught Harry how to see the flaws in the metal, then once it was done, how to create the best mix possible, depending on what you wanted to use your weapons for and the qualities desired by the crafter. Then, he showed him the different steps to a sword's creation. He told Harry that learning how to make weapons was a lifetime task and that he would only teach him the basics, but that those would help him to understand his blades better. The night passed quickly



under the dwarf's authority. Harry left the underground at 2 a.m., and woke up at 7 a.m. For the whole week, the days followed the same pattern. By the end, the dwarf led Harry to a different room. On their way they met quite a few dwarves. Some of them Harry had met during his time there, and others were perfect strangers, but none of them paid them a lot of attention. They finally stopped before a huge steel-door. This was the first door Harry had seen there. Terio turned to Harry.

"We keep all the weapons we make in there. Now, listen carefully. You don't choose the weapon--it's the weapon which chooses you, always remember that," he explained.

"I will."

"Good, follow me."

He put his hand on the door, which glowed slightly before opening.

They entered slowly and Harry stared in wonder. He felt like he had opened his Gringotts' vault for the first time. There were weapons everywhere: daggers and swords of all types, sheaths, bows with a quiver and some arrows, spears, knives...

"Have a look around. You will know when you'll found the ones right for you," said Terio.

Harry obeyed and started to walk through the room, sometimes picking up a sword or a bow, testing them a bit before putting them back to the piles. After an hour, he still hadn't found anything that seemed right for him. Glancing at Terio, he found him sitting in a corner, smoking. Sighing, Harry went back to the task at hand. Finally a flash of metal attracted his eye. He approached it. It was a sword--a masterpiece.

The blade was the perfect weight, and perfectly polished and sharpened. The metal used was quite peculiar and Harry couldn't recognize it. The handle ending the blade was well crafted and when Harry picked it up, it seemed to have been made for his hand. The sheath was made of leather with a golden pattern on it. He looked at the blade, studying it in the light. The stone placed at the junction of



the blade and the handle shone a little. Some of the swords made by dwarves comported stones, as Terio had told him, which could be used to store some magical powers, allowing their bearer to deflect curses with them. The nature of the stone depended on the bearer. Here, it was a piece of amber.

Looking closer at it, Harry noticed the stone had something embedded in its center, but he couldn't see what it was. *This was his sword*, he thought without any hesitation. He looked around, trying to see if there was anything else interesting there. A dagger caught his eye. It was made of the same metal as the sword and held a stone as well. The handle was shaped like claws on the sides. Harry found his bow a few minutes later with its quiver and arrows.

He came back to Terio, who had observed him throughout his search, wondering which weapons he would end with. The human was interesting to watch. He was young--that was a given--and prone to the mistakes of youth, but at the same time he had a maturity rarely seen in younglings. Yes... the boy was interesting. And that power! When he had first met him it had hit him like a hammer and Harry had no idea about the forces he was wielding. He schooled his features as the boy came towards him.

His face was unreadable when Harry showed him what he had picked up.

"The sword and the dagger, as well as the tips of the arrows, are made of a mix which we are now unable to produce. Its inventor died with his secret and didn't see fit to pass it down to one of his apprentices. These are his last and best creations. The bow is made of ebony and birch and the strings of dragons' ligaments taken after their death. The arrows are made of willow and some eagle and phoenix feathers," explained the dwarf.

He led Harry outside. Before leaving, he looked closely at the youth.

"Take good care of those weapons. If you have a problem come back and ask for me, I'll help you."

"Thank you."



"No need, good luck."

Harry nodded, thanking the dwarf again before going back to the Headquarters. He hid his weapons in a charmed box. he had made it expandable and impossible for anyone other than himself to open. To add to these security measures, the box was hidden in the wall, behind a few removable bricks Harry had personally charmed.

The next morning, he was up at 4 a.m. for his training.

After an hour of jogging, stretching and warming-up, he started to practice with his new sword. This did it. After the first few moves, Harry wanted only one thing: to master sword fighting. Moving with his sword gave him incredible feelings: a mix of power, strength, and something else he couldn't really name, a sense of completion that filled him, making him a bit dizzy.

#### End of the Flashback.

From that day, his progress in this field was quick. He improved in archery and reached an average level. He trained also in hand to hand combat, mixing street fighting, martial arts, and gymnastics, creating his own style of fighting. Sometimes he would learn a new technique in hours; other times, it would take him days before getting another one straight...

Arxeren also trained him to hone his magical abilities. Firstly, he taught him how to channel his magic out of his body, therefore allowing him to use wandless magic. This was a tedious task that took Harry a month to complete. When he managed to shoot a few sparks out of his hand, he was overjoyed, and it took Arxeren minutes to calm him. Once he had done that, his training became easier. He would learn how to cast the spells with andwithout his wand, but in the end, he found the wandless way easier.

Arxeren told him that theoretically any wizard or witch could learn how to do wandless magic, but also that it was extremely difficult to understand the concept and that people's abilities varied more or less, for it depended on how the flows of magic circulated in their bodies.



To his pleasure, Harry progressed steadily. Of course, he sometimes had to overcome some problems and setbacks, but that didn't stop him.

Another aspect of his training was Mind Magic. He slowly reached a good level of empathy and could move things with his mind but it took him a lot of energy. Nonetheless he trained, knowing that this ability might save his life one day. At first Mind Magic had sounded to him like Magic sounded to a muggle: a fairy tale. But Arxeren explained to him that what the elves called Mind Magic was what he called accidental magic, in a way. These abilities were focused mostly on his will and inner core of magic. It was all about redirecting his inner magic through his mind and supplying it with enough power to exert his will.

The more energies his mind channelled, the more areas of his mind were put to work, and the more of his brain he used.

Harry had once read that humans only used 20 of their brain. Arxeren told him that adequate stimulation of certain areas could lead to the appearance and control of new abilities, but that those would always be dependent on his power level, since they would feed on it, making it extremely draining.

However, Mind Magic had an interesting secondary effect: it enhanced his magical skills. With his mind, he could now see the magic inside him and manipulate it to allow himself easier access to it and increase his power.

His skills weren't the only things that had changed. He had changed, both physically and mentally. His training was shaping him. Slowly, he was changing from a scrawny boy to a well-toned teenager. However, when looking at him, you wouldn't expect him to be strong.

He was slender and didn't have bulging muscles to show his strength. But there wasn't any fat on him, thanks to the Dursleys and to the diet Arxeren forced him to follow. He needed strength, but huge muscles would have cost him some of his agility, and would have slowed his movements. However, his hair was as messy as ever and he had lost all hope of taming it. The biggest change was visible in his eyes.



Since Christmas, his eyes had been cold, cautious. He had become more silent, learned to melt into the shadows, walk without a sound, and on top of all of this, he had learned how to hide his emotions. Those things were essential to his survival. Some of the other students, meaning Garth, Chrisianne, Ribor, Xjahl and Vlad, would jump at any opportunity to mock him.

Though they still taunted him from time to time, they didn't as often as they used to. Harry had built himself a blank mask that he constantly wore, hiding what he was feeling and thinking, only showing blank and cold indifference. He was more thoughtful, and collected. If someone from Hogwarts was to see him now, he would have had a hard time recognizing the Boy-Who-Lived, with all the changes he had undergone during the past nine months.

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What did you think of it?

Let me know!

Thanks to those who reviewed, you're the best!

Naia



## **Chapter Five**

Teneb

Harry woke up at 4 a.m. as usual. It had become a sort of routine for him now. He quickly got up, took a shower and dressed, doing it all silently so as not to wake his dorm mates. He left the room, after casting an illusion on his bed showing him sleeping, and headed towards the paddocks, not forgetting his weapons. Once he had left them, and let's just say that Arxeren hadn't been happy. Harry winced at the memory. He walked soundlessly along the corridors, something he had learned fast. Being soundless had become second nature to him.

Finally he reached a paddock and stopped. Climbing over the fence, he walked a few steps before stopping and looking around. Then, he whistled sharply twice and waited for something. A few seconds later, a horse could be heard galloping. Indeed, soon a stallion appeared and headed towards the young wizard. He stopped a few meters away. Harry smiled and approached the beast. The stallion was huge, and entirely black, except for his mane and his tail which were a silvery gray color. Another characteristic was the two white stockings on his rear legs and a mark shaped like a crescent moon on his forehead. Harry petted the horse, speaking softly to him. Then in a wave of his hand he readied the horse and jumped on him. Leaning forward, he whispered in his ear.

"Go Shadow!"

Immediately the horse started to gallop towards the highest hill of the island.

On his back, Harry was thoroughly enjoying the race, the winds hitting his face as his horse accelerated again. He recalled the first time he had met his stallion.

Flashback.

Harry had just finished cleaning the stables and was starting to feed the horses in the paddocks when he arrived to the one in which Lienhior had forbidden him to enter.



Curious, he climbed on the fence and tried to see the horse living here. He knew the horse was called Shadow, but everyone agreed that it was a wild beast that nobody could ride. Suddenly, he saw a black shape on the opposite side of the paddock.

Against his orders, he jumped down on the other side and walked towards it, curiosity getting the better of him.

Finally the stallion came into view. It was one the most amazing sights he had ever laid his eyes on. The beast was radiating energy. In its smallest movements, you could see its wildness. Smelling Harry, the stallion, which had been eating, looked up and directed his eyes towards the intruder. The young boy was caught in its gaze.

Lienhior had never allowed him to have a horse like all the other students, and he was longing for one, after it was his right! Deciding that it wouldn't do any harm to try to mount this stallion, as nobody wanted to, Harry approached it. As he come closer, the stallion became more and more nervous, shaking his mane, pawing the ground with his hooves... Harry put a hand on his back and in a strong push, jumped onto his back. Five seconds later, he was laying flat on his own back, seeing little stars dancing around his head...

Shakily, he stood up. Then he heard someone laughing. Looking around, he didn't saw anybody. Shaking his head, he dismissed it as an after-effect of his fall. But the laughter didn't disappear--quite the opposite--it grew stronger. Then, he guessed whose laughter it was.

That's not funny! Arxeren!

Took you long to guess it was me! And sorry, but it WAS funny, you should have seen your face...

Instead of laughing, you could help me!

With what?!

You're really thick! The horse!

And so?



Arxeren...

What?

Stop it!

Stop what?

You're really annoying you know...

That's part of my charm...

Right...

You were saying?

I was asking for your help.

I don't recall hearing the magical word...

Please!

That's not the word...

What is it then?

Arxeren is the best.

I'm not saying that!

Have it your way!

Harry sighed heavily.

Alright, Arxeren is the best. Happy? Now could you help me?

That wasn't too difficult, was it? What do you want?

You're doing that on purpose, right?

Doing what?



Nothing, never mind. Harry sighed, sometimes, Arxeren was really being a pain...

Really?

Yes, I was asking for help to mount this horse...

You put your hand on his back and jump on it.

I did that and I lasted five seconds on his back.

Well in that case, you need to have him used to your weight and your presence.

And how do I do this?

Listen, first you have to...

Arxeren gave him a detailed explanation on the method to follow to train Shadow.

For the following days, Harry didn't try to mount the stallion again. Instead he came every evening to take care of him: Brushing his coat, combing his mane and tail... Little by little, the horse got used to his scent and became less and less nervous in Harry's presence; he even seemed to take some pleasure in the sessions. Things stayed this way for about two weeks. At this time, Shadow had become quite used to Harry's smell and touch. Then in addition to taking care of him, Harry started to accustom him to his weight, leaning more and more on his back.

Finally after a month, he could lay across Shadow's back. He decided then to try to mount him again. This time he lasted two minutes before being thrown to the ground. The stallion had remained still for a minute, his body trembling with contained fury at having someone on his back. However, Harry didn't give up and continued. Little by little, he stayed longer and longer. Harry had never learnt to ride and was following Arxeren's instructions blindly, nursing his bruises every night. He never used trappings as he didn't have any and couldn't take the ones in the stables for fear of their disappearance being noticed. He could have conjured some, but Arxeren had said not to,



arguing that if he could stay on the stallion's back and direct him without trappings, he would be able to do the same thing with trappings.

All in all, it took him two months to manage it, but he did it and at the end of these two months, he could ride Shadow with and without trappings. It was the beginning of a great companionship, Shadow being the only being, except Arxeren, who would listen to Harry.

### End of the Flashback.

Since then, Harry had always ridden Shadow at least once a day. Each morning, he would come to the paddock, get Shadow ready and ride to the hill where he would then train for the two following hours before coming back to the headquarters.

He snapped back to reality as Shadow slowed down. He looked around and smiled. He was on the top of the hill and could see a big part of the island. The sun was up early here, around 5 a.m. He climbed off Shadow, deciding to train himself first before starting to work with the stallion, allowing the beast to rest a bit. First, he started to jog, then stretched. After, it was time for his magical training; he practiced a bit on his wandless magic, casting spells, curses and hexes on targets he had conjured before. Arxeren advised and corrected him. Then he moved onto his elemental ability. He remembered the first time Arxeren had told him about him being able to control an element...

### Flashback

Harry had just finished his training and was sheathing his sword when Arxeren spoke to him.

Harry?

Yes?

I think you can start practicing your elemental ability.

WHAT?!



What did I say about yelling...

Sorry, but I thought I heard you saying I had to train some elemental ability...

That's exactly what I said.

It's official. You're definitely mad!

Why?

Because it's impossible.

Why?

Because... Because it is.

Good argument

Don't joke, it's not funny... Harry was getting rather annoyed at the spirit.

I'm not joking

You are.

Try at least!

Why should I?

You have nothing to loose

There's no point on try to do something impossible!

Just try!

But...

Try for god's sake!

Alright, alright, calm down, what must I do?



Focus on the power inside you and try to push it outside.

Harry did as he was told, but nothing happened.

You see!

When I said try, I meant that you had to believe in what you were doing!

Alright!

This time, Harry focused himself, putting all his doubts behind him, only keeping the belief that he could do it in his mind. Suddenly, he felt a rush of power and an incredible heat. He looked around and nearly panicked: he was circled by fire. Looking widely around, he tried to find a way out, panic rising in his body.

Stop! STOP! You're going to burn yourself!

Immediately Harry stopped focusing and the flames disappeared, only leaving a large circle of ashes around himself.

"Whoa!" was Harry's only comment.

As you've seen, you have control over fire.

I saw...

And I'll have you practicing on your skill, at least to prevent you from burning everything each time you lose control

Harry remained silent, reflecting on what he had just learned.

End of the Flashback.

He smiled at this memory. He had thought training his element would be easy, but he had had huge difficulties achieving it--it had been even more difficult than gaining control of wandless magic. First, he had spent hours meditating, and only meditating. Then he had learned to focus. Only then, had he been allowed to conjure a small ball of fire, something he had trouble doing. He would more likely burn everything in a two meter radius than conjure a small ball. Once



he had managed to learn how to control the intensity of the power he was conjuring, he had to work on changing the shape of what he was conjuring. He had to conjure balls, rings, arrows, spirals, flowers, animals... of fire.

Now, he had quite good control over it. At least from what Arxeren had said.

Finally he passed to the physical training. He whistled twice and Shadow approached. He quickly mounted the horse and started to practice some of the moves he had been learning the day before. He slowly added acrobatics to this practice. Then, he worked on Shadow's agility. Finally, he stopped and with a flick of his hand conjured a circuit of fire. He speeded towards the first obstacle: a slalom, then he had to duck flying fireballs, and then Shadow had to jump over a few obstacles. Harry had had a hard time getting the stallion used to the fire.

After that, he arrived to the part he liked the least: he unsheathed his knives and threw them as he passed near the targets, hoping they would reach their aim for once. He had never been really good at archery. After that he took his bow, which was strapped to his back, and shot some arrows at moving targets on his left and right, before reaching the end.

Well, quite good time, but you missed three targets with your knives and two others hit them far from the center. Your arrows hit all the targets but your aim wasn't really good. So you know what this means...

Game over, play again...

Exactly.

Sighing, Harry directed Shadow towards the start of the circuit to do it again. All in all he had to do it four times before Arxeren was satisfied. Then, he dismissed the circuit, climbed off Shadow, cleaned him and conjured some food for him before unsheathing his swords and starting his training. Arxeren had made him learn a sequence of movements, a bit like a dance. He had to do it several times, each time accelerating a bit, before slowing down little by little.



Once it was done, he would work on new movements. When he was finally finished, he was panting a bit and leaned on Shadow to rest before continuing his training. As he was doing so, he felt a spell hitting him. He had cast a shield on himself and was keeping it raised at all times, except in classes as it would be noticed by the teacher--something he wanted to prevent. He whirled on his heel and looked at the hill, his eyes widening as he took in those standing there: he saw six riders he recognized easily as Teneb, Inir, Malisa, Arnelle, Opheria and Kobalt.

Shit!

Language!

Oh shut up! I have to get out of here!

No need to become rude, they can't see who you are from the hill.

Harry didn't answer. He jumped on Shadow and with a flick of his hand apparated near the headquarters, in the back of Shadow's paddock to be precise.

He quickly dismounted and took care of the stallion before hurrying to his dorm.

He'd have to be more careful next time...

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Teneb and his friends had decided to go for a walk that morning with their horse. So they woke up earlier, took their horses and left the buildings. They had decided to go to the hill, having heard that the view was extraordinary there. They were talking and joking when they reached the top of the hill. For a few moments they were silent, admiring the view when suddenly Inir spotted something.

"Hey! Look!" he said, pointing to something.

Teneb looked closely and saw a rider galloping in the plain before them. They all looked speechless at the rider who started to do acrobatics. Teneb had considered himself as a good rider, at least



until he saw this stranger. He was dressed in black clothes with a bow strapped on his back and a sword hanging at his sides and was mounting a black stallion with a gray mane and tail and two white stockings. He couldn't see his face clearly, only noticed he had black hair.

The stranger slowed and stopped.

"He's good." said Inir.

"More than good." replied Opheria, focused on the unknown rider. "Isn't it Shadow he is riding?"

"Shadow?" repeated Marisa "I thought nobody could mount him..."

"Me too, but this horse looks exactly like him so either it's Shadow, or it's his twin..." Said Opheria.

Their musing on the horse identity was interrupted as, suddenly, to their shock, the young man raised one his hand and flicked it. Instantly a circuit made of fire appeared. At this moment, if the six friends hadn't been sitting on their horses they would have fallen on the ground.

"He has control over fire!" exclaimed Kobalt.

"Apparently," said Marisa, amazement audible in her voice.

Teneb couldn't help but feel amazed by this man. Fire was one of the most dangerous elements, as it had a tendency of overwhelming its bearer. It was strongly linked to feelings. He himself was an air element. In general all the riders had more or less control over one element. And this man was conjuring a whole circuit o fire without effort.

They watched the rider doing the circuit a few times before climbing off his horse.

"Do you know who it is?" asked Arnelle.



"No, but there isn't a lot of riders with control of fire and dark hair... There are..." before Inir could list all the riders entering this category, the black-haired man started to move with his sword, becoming faster and faster. He seemed to dance while fighting an invisible enemy. His sword was merely a blur. Apparently he was enjoying himself. He slowed down step by step.

"This man is one of the best swordsman I've ever seen..." stated Inir.

"Yeah, I think he may be able to beat Efilin," added Kobalt.

Teneb was silent. Elves were famous for their skills with bows and swords and loved to demonstrate. Surely he would have noticed someone this skilled, but he couldn't recognize this man.

"Perhaps," he said slowly.

"I really wonder who he is..." said Opheria.

"Me too... Teneb? Do you know a spell which could identify him?" asked Inir.

Teneb was recognized as the best student in the headquarters, according to all the teachers.

The young elf nodded and raised his hand, pointing it to the rider who was now leaning on his horse, and cast an identification spell. As the spell was about to hit the stranger, it seemed to bounced on something.

Teneb swore. A shield! Why hadn't he thought of this possibility!

The stranger immediately looked up towards them. He jumped on his stallion, raised his hand and disappeared into thin air.

The six youths stared at the space where he had stood seconds before.

"What happened?" asked Kobalt, a bit dazed...

"To be truthful, I don't know..." answered Arnelle.



"Me either... who do you think he is?" The curiosity was evident in Inir's tone.

"I don't know, but I intend on finding out... Maybe he could teach us a few things..."

"Right." Nodded Opheria.

"The problem is that I've no clue about who he might be."

"We have a few clues," said Opheria. "He has black hair, control over fire, is an expert at sword-fight and can ride Shadow. I'm practically sure it was Shadow."

"It narrows the list, there aren't a lot of people who fulfill all of these characteristics," stated Teneb. "I doubt there are any. From what I've heard, nobody can ride Shadow..."

The others shrugged.

"Well, we should go back if we don't want to be late..." said Kobalt.

"You're right, let's go," said Marisa.

They headed towards the headquarters in silence, each of them trying to guess who this mysterious rider was...

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Well, I hope you enjoyed it.

Once again, thanks to you all!

Naia



## **Chapter Six**

### Finding Out

Teneb and his friends went back to the headquarters, only talking about the mysterious rider, trying to guess who it was.

"It wasn't a Magis, I'm sure of it," said Kobalt.

"How do you know?" asked Marisa.

"We, Magis, can feel each other. I would have immediately known if he was one of us."

"And he isn't an Elemental." added Opheria.

"Why?" Teneb who was leading the way was looking at her.

"When he used fire, he didn't do it the way we Elementals do. We are in tune with our element. He was tapping in the power of the element through his own power."

"So he is an elf."

"Yes, all the other possibilities have been ruled out. But I really wonder who he is. From what I heard, nobody had been able to ride Shadow..."

"Maybe you were wrong; it might have been another horse..."

"Perhaps, but I'm pretty sure it was Shadow. I'll ask Lienhior if someone has managed to mount him," said Opheria.

"Good idea... Anyway I don't know a lot of elf-riders with control over fire. There must be about six or seven of them..."

"Yeah... I think there is Haram," Kobalt started.

"He's blond."

"Right then Jeessala."



"This rider was definitively a male," Inir cut in.

"Listen to the expert..." teased Arnelle.

"Then, there are Garan and Ferin"

"They have dark hair, but Garan couldn't hold a sword properly, even if his life depended on it... It could be Ferin though..." Teneb said thoughtfully.

"And finally Kassim and Téal."

"Téal has brown hair, but it could be Kassim too."

They fell silent as they arrived at the headquarters. Quickly they dismounted and put their horses back to their paddocks after taking care of them. Then they hurried to Effilin's class, knowing the teacher wouldn't be pleased to have them late, even if he wouldn't punish them, being very fond of Teneb and Kobalt.

The day passed uneventfully for them and at the end of the riding-lesson, Opheria approached Lienhior who was petting his own stallion.

"Excuse me?"

The men looked up and his feature at the sight of Opheria, his favorite and by far his best student.

"Yes Opheria?"

"Well sir, I would have liked to know if someone has ever been able to ride Shadow?" she asked simply.

"No! Never!" the elf replied. "That horse is completely wild, nobody managed to make something of him. That's a shame, because he's the best stallion we have."

"Really?"

"Yes," answered Lienhior, enthusiastically, as he always was when talking about his horses. "He comes from a long line of champions,



and his origins are ones of the best possible. He's the result of a carefully followed breed-program. Sadly he's untamable. So, we're going to use him for breeding. Maybe his descendants will be more tamable."

"That's amazing!" exclaimed Opheria, a bit forcefully, to please the rider.

"Isn't it?"

"Yes, thank you a lot."

"You're welcome."

"Well, Good evening."

"You too."

They parted Lienhior to the stables and Opheria to find her friends.

They were eating, quietly talking when the young Magis sat heavily in her chair, sighing.

"What's the matter Pheria?"

"Nothing, just that Lienhior told me no one could ride Shadow."

"You must have been wrong then, I mean, we were quite far away from him, you could have mistake his horse with another."

"Maybe, but I was sure..."

"Drop it, Opheria; you must have been wrong..." Inir cut in.

"Alright! But tomorrow I'm going back there to be sure."

"I'll come with you," said Teneb, followed by all the others.

They agreed to meet the next morning at five at the stables.

For the following week they went to the hill each morning, trying to see a glimpse of the fighter's face. With no success, since the first



time they surprised him, he had been more cautious, keeping a close watch of his surroundings and they hadn't been able to even identify his horse. At the beginning of the second week, Teneb's friends grew fed up with having to wake up so early, only to see a glimpse of black before watching the stranger disappear.

"That was the last time I went there," Arnelle stated exasperatedly.

"You're right, I'm fed up with having to wake up so early!" exclaimed Inir.

The others, minus Teneb voiced their agreement.

"Teneb?"

The young elf was deep in thought.

"Yes?"

"What about you?"

"I think I'm going to keep trying to find who he is... I'm too curious."

"Way too curious for your own good, if you want to know... But have you thought about the possibility of him being someone from the outside, able to come here through an unknown way...?"

"I have... I asked Oras about it. He said it was impossible unless this person had an incredible amount of power. There are wards on this island making it impossible from someone of the outside to enter the island by appearing or apparating. The island is also un-plotable."

"Alright, alright... I understand, possibility ruled out. Well, good luck on your watch, but you'll do this without me. I'm not waking earlier than 7 a.m.," said Inir.

His friends agreed with Inir.

Teneb shrugged.

"Alright..."



For the next week he kept failing at finding even the smallest clues about the mysterious fighter, but he didn't give up. Teneb was known for his persevering and his curiosity, two major traits of his character. At the end of the second weeks his efforts finally paid...

He had decided to wake up a bit earlier and arrived at the hill while the rider was practicing his archery. He was about to shot an arrow when he seemed to sense Teneb. Startled he missed his target. He whistled, clapped his hands, making his stuff disappeared before jumping on his horse's back and disappearing too. Teneb sighed but decided to check the area like he always did, to see if the stranger hadn't left any clues behind him. He climbed of his stallion and walked where he had been standing, looking carefully at the ground. He was ready to give up when something shiny caught his eye. He bent down and picked it up, his breath caught in his throat. It was an arrow. He could see that some willow was used to make it, as well as some eagle's and phoenix's feathers, but the metal at the end was puzzling him. He had never seen it before. He turned the weapon in his hand, weighing it. It was perfectly balanced. All in all, it was perfectly made. Looking closer at it, he was a small mark, printed in the wood, a lightning bolt to be precise. He gave the arrow a last look before going back to his horse and tying it to the saddle. His mind was full of unanswered questions. What did this mark mean? Who had made it? Where did it come from? And so forth. He went back to the headquarters, lost in his thoughts, took care of his stallion Myst, put the arrow with his stuff and headed for his fighting class. He arrived nearly late and saw Effilin giving him a disapproving look before motioning for him to join the others. As he reached his friends they gave him interrogating looks.

"Why were you late?" whispered Marisa.

"I'll tell you all after the class."

His friends nodded before switching their attention to the teachers who started to speak.

"Alright, Daryns! Today, we're going to spar a bit before doing a small tournament. I'd like you to..."



As he spoke, explaining once again the rules of a spar, Teneb's mind drifted back to the stranger. He decided to study the arrow this evening. He scanned the room when he saw the door opening slowly and silently and the human entering. He went to the back of the room discreetly and waited for Effilin to finish. Teneb looked at him curiously. He had totally forgotten about ... what was his name?...Hassan? Or maybe Hares? He eyed him, noticing the average height, the slender body and the messy black hair. Then he put his eyes back on the fighter.

Effilin had stopped speaking and was looking at the back of the room.

"Human!" he barked.

Harry looked up. Teneb was a bit puzzled by the blank look. Wasn't he at least a bit intimidated by the master?

"Yes, master?"

"Do you think you can arrive late for my class and get away with it?"

Harry didn't answer.

"Too stupid to answer? It was to be expected! You're doing nothing, except wasting our time. But you must think otherwise, since you thought you could afford coming late to my lesson."

A few students snickered at this, but as Teneb studied the human's face which was a blank one, nothing was showing he had been hurt by these words.

This lack of reaction seemed to surprise Effilin a bit. The master sighed angrily.

"Since you think so high of yourself, you won't mind facing Teneb? Sure it shouldn't be too difficult for you..." His voice was filled with sarcasm.

He clapped his hand.

"Face your opponent, standard rules."



The youths got into place and waited for his signal.

As soon as he signaled for them to start, Teneb attacked, deciding to finish the human quickly, preventing him from being more humiliated than he was already.

A bit surprisingly, the human parried all his blows. Teneb's brows furrowed. Sure he was taking things easy to spare him too much humiliation, but if he was as bad as the teacher had said he shouldn't have been able to stop one of his blows. He moved on more hard stuff, surprised to see his opponent continuing to parry everything, even if he seemed to be in difficulty. As he threw a punch to his face, he watched as the human ducked it, his hair throw aside, showing his whole face. Suddenly, Teneb noticed something that stunned him beyond all the things imaginable. On the human's forehead stood a lightning bolt, identical to the one on the arrow...

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Harry swore to himself. He had been interrupted again during his training, but this time he had been so caught up in his practice that he hadn't sense the intruder coming. He had lost an arrow in his retreat and spent a long time searching it with no success and now he was late for Effilin's class! What a day!

He slipped in the class, praying against all hope that the teacher hadn't noticed his absence. But he didn't have this luck. He half-listened to Effilin's rant, knowing already what he was saying by heart, having heard it quite a lot of times. He was a bit worry with having to fight Teneb, but dismissed his worries, he would just fake a defeat, loosing badly enough to content Effilin. He faced the young elf and waited for the fight to start. As his opponent attacked, he was careful to duck or parry the blows. Faking difficulties and defeat he nearly missed a punch coming his way and ducked hurriedly. He went back to his defensive stance, expecting a new blow, but nothing came. He looked up and noticed Teneb starring at his forehead, more precisely to his scar. He frowned, what was so interesting with his scar, sure it had an odd shape, known thorough the Wizarding world, but there was nothing strange for an elf... Then it hit him, its shape! The arrow!! How could he have been so stupid! Putting this mark on it!!



Mentally slapping himself and quietly swearing, Harry took a step forward, as if he had stumbled on his feet, and grabbed Teneb's arm, knowing that if he openly attacked Teneb, Effilin would surely noticed something was wrong.

"Don't stand like a stupid gaping fish! You must win this fight, so attack! It shouldn't be too hard for you to crush the mere and lower human I am...", he whispered quickly in the young elf's ear.

This seemed to kick Teneb's pride as he snapped out of his stunned state.

He attacked violently the young wizard. Harry, who had been ready for this kind of reaction, blocked all the blows and quickly faked his own defeat, falling on his back.

Immediately Effilin started to yell at him.

"I give up human! You're hopeless! I really wonder why you were chosen and why you kept coming to my class since it looks like you can't even learn the simplest things!"

He went on for a few minutes and Harry tried his best to look embarrassed and humiliated, sensing the gaze of Teneb on him. Once the teacher was finished he turned back to the other students who had finished their fight and had been listening to his lecture, amused to see the human being yelled at.

"Is everyone finished? Shake hands."

Everyone shook the hand of his or her opponent, congratulating him on his fight. Teneb felt a small note passing in his hand as he shook the human's.

They parted and Effilin explained the works of the tournament. As the first two fighters started to spar, Teneb looked at the note. It read: Meet me tomorrow at five at the hill. Come alone and don't talk about it to anyone. He looked up towards Harry, seeing him shining the swords, as Effilin had forbidden him of participating to the small tournament, caught his eyes and nodded. He pocketed the note and readied for his first fight, against Garth.



The winner wasn't a surprise. Teneb won easily, much to Effilin's pleasure.

During the whole day, he observed the human, trying to see any of the skills he had showed at the hill. When his friends asked about his lateness in the morning, he said his horses had lost a shoe. He could barely restrain himself from grabbing the human and asking him all the questions whirling in his mind. How could have a...human become that powerful! It wasn't...right! This was probably the first day he didn't pay attention to his classes, something really unusual. During the whole evening he was quiet, too lost in his thought to think about something else. He went to bed early. He didn't fall asleep easily, his mind too full of interrogations. But, he was up at 4.30 a.m. the next morning, literally bouncing off his bed. As he passed before the human's bed, he did a double-take, as he saw him still sleeping. He approached and grabbed his arm. Well to be precise he only grabbed thin air. He withdrew his hand.

"An illusion," he muttered. He shook his head, adding this to his list of things to ask. He got ready, left and reached the hill a bit late. The human was there as usual, and now he clearly recognized him. He was in the middle of his sword's dance and Teneb decided not to interrupt him. He approached quietly, focused on him, barely acknowledging the horse eating a few meters away, not disturbed at all by his rider's movements.

Teneb watched attentively his moves and his face. The day before, he had been puzzled by one thing, while observing him: his look. The human had had an unreadable face thorough the whole day, not showing emotions once, always wearing a cold and indifferent look. Now he was deeply focused and concentrated, unaware of anything except his sword. Teneb watched him captivated. He was amazed at him. The movements were nearly flawless, except for a few minors details which was to be expected in a series like that. Of course an elf would be able to do so, but this human was more graceful than any of the fighters Teneb had seen. There was something in his movements, Teneb could tell the human was putting his whole being in this dance.



As Harry finished it, Teneb came closer. The young wizard didn't acknowledge him, his back facing the elf, as he was carefully checking his sword before sheathing it.

There a long silence, only broke by Harry.

"So you came..." he said in a cold voice. He wasn't in the best of moods. He had been discovered, something he had wanted to avoid at all cost and moreover he had spent a dreadful night: his scar had woken him in the middle of the night, twitching for an hour. It had been doing so for the past two month, sometimes, usually during the night, he would sense an unpleasant twitch on his forehead, which would generally disappear after a few hours. This way he knew Voldemort was doing something... Not killing, or his scar would have burned, but he was doing something. It was very frustrating, because he hadn't had a single dream since he arrived there, so things must be going right for the Dark Lord, as it was generally when he was cross that Harry had those dreams.

"That was amazing!" said Teneb in a whisper.

"So the human is worth the attention of an elf?..."

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Life had gone on at Hogwarts, even if Harry's absence was still in all the minds. It had been three months since the start of the term and Christmas holidays were approaching slowly. The Wizarding world was still researching for Harry and the Daily Prophet was publishing a small daily article about the state of the researches but people had started to give up hopes on finding the Boy-Who-Lived, many were starting to believe him dead.

Hermione and Ron weren't part of this group. They believed firmly in the fact that Harry was still alive and were extremely worried about him. Fudge was still in denial, something which was infuriating them.

"Could this man be more stupid?" Ron sighed angrily, reading the Daily Prophet an owl had just brought.

"What has he done again?" asked Hermione.



*"Listen: 'I was asked several times about the possible return of You-Know-Who. And I want to say that this is a gigantic nonsense, started by the Boy-who-lived. But need me to remind you that after the death of a student during the Tri-wizard tournament, the boy had been slightly delusional, maybe a consequence of the Avada Kedavra. There is absolutely no reason to panic over a boy's words, who was at the moment he said them, quite shaken. He must have been victim of illusions, or hallucinations. I want to add that Harry Potter will be heard as witness about Diggory's death, to see if he played a role in it, which is a possibility if the boy is loosing control over himself or is delusional. So again, I ask everyone to rest assure: there is no danger.'" These were the words of the Minister when asked about the rumors concerning the Dark Lord's return. When asked about the abnormal magical activity in Siberia, Transylvania, in the Amazonian forest, the more and more frequent apparition of dark creatures, the Minister answered that he must be some people taking advantages of these rumors and impersonating Death Eaters. What must we believe? Albus Dumbledore, eminently respected Headmaster of Hogwarts had been supporting the news of You-know-who's return, saying that the magical world must prepare itself for his rise. The Headmaster has enforced greatly the security's measures around the school, to reassure the parents, worried about their children's safety. Is the Dark Lord really back? Is this some kind of a sick joke? The question remained unanswered."* And so forth, I'll spare you the rest of the article," Ron spat angrily.

"I don't know if he is stupid, but you have to admit that being that blind and stubborn is quite incredible...," the young witch replied.

"Yeah, I'm sure that if he was to become an Animagi, it'll be a mule..."

"Probably, what have we first?"

"Defense against the Dark Arts with Ravenclaw."

"At least we haven't Potions first."

"You're right; come on, or we'll be late."

"I'm coming, I'm coming."



They were the first to arrive in the classroom. They took their seats in the front, courtesy of Hermione. Their teacher Professor Figg was at her desk, reading through a thick volume.

The two Gryffindor put their homework on their table and chatted quietly until the other students arrived. Professor Figg was a great teacher, nearly as great as Lupin. Today they'd start on a new subject.

Once everyone was gathered in the room, she put her book down and stood up, collecting their papers. She went back to her desk and faced the students.

"Alright class, today we're going to talk about dragons and how you can defend yourself from them."

Hermione and Ron looked at each other, mouthing Norbert.

"Now, can someone tell me what is the weak point of a dragon?"

Not surprisingly Hermione raised her hand, as well as a few Ravenclaw students.

"Miss Granger?"

"The dragon's weak point is its eyes."

"Exactly, five points to Gryffindor. The eyes of a dragon are one of their only weak points. Can someone tell me why?"

This time it was a Ravenclaw that answered.

"The scales of a dragon can shield him from magic."

"True, five points. Now, to blind the dragon you can use the Conjunctivitus charm, which will blind it for some time, but the problem linked to this curse, is that it is quite painful. Therefore it will anger the beast and make it more dangerous. You can also use a simple blinding charm which, even if doesn't last long, will allowed you to escape. Now what are the dangers of a dragon?"



Various answers fused all over the class. "Fire", "horns", "claws", "blades" and a few others.

"Very well. So now we're going to learn a few spells which could come in handy if you were to cross the path of a full grown dragon. First..." For the following hour, they practiced invisibility spells, charms which would hide your smell, silence your every moves. These spells could also be used to spy. A few minutes before the end of the lesson, she asked the student to put their wands down.

"Now as you all know, they are about ten different types of dragons in the world, each of them carefully watched. But there were legend about a group of people who could ride dragons slightly different from them. These legends are hundreds year-old and thought by most of the historian to be pure invention. But thorough the centuries there have been some witnesses of strange dragons. An explication of this is the possibility of two different types mating and giving birth to hybrids. To defeat a hybrid, you have to use the same technique than with a real dragon, just being careful that the hybrid will have the characteristics of both his parents." Just as she finished, the bell rang and the students gathered their books, heading for their next class.

"That was interesting," said Hermione.

"Yeah, I wish I've known in my first year... And Harry would have liked to know this last year for the first task..."

The mention of their friend shattered their good mood, and for the walk to the Transfiguration classroom, they were silent, each reflecting on their own thought and memories.

Transfiguration went as usual, they were studying Animagi, well, the theory only. This lesson didn't help their mood as Animagi was something Harry would have loved to learn about.

As the holidays came nearer, the professors started to load them with homework, much to Ron's dismay.

Potions' class had nearly became unbearable: between Malfoy's comment and Snape unfairness towards Gryffindor, something which had increased since last year, it was taking all of the Gryffindor will



and concentration not to lose too much points in this class, the average being thirty.

Dueling had been reinstated, but this time not as a club but as an optional class. Needless to say that most of the students sign up. It had been quite different from the last time with Lockhart. The Hogwarts' students were learning effective curses, defense methods, but also awareness, reflexes, agility. It had been a surprise when they discovered who was teaching them: Moody, and Lupin. The return of Professor Lupin had been appreciated by the majority of the student body, especially by all who had had him during his year at Hogwarts.

Christmas holidays finally came and the students sighed in relief, now allowed to relax a bit.

On Christmas day, Hermione and Ron, who had decided to stay at Hogwarts this year, woke up early and went down in the common room. There they opened their present in silence, the absence of their friend present in their mind. They had tried to contact him times and times, using Hedwig, but even his owl couldn't find him... Their only hope was that he was well.

Then they walked to the Great Hall, decorated as greatly as ever: icicles shinning, Christmas trees artfully ornate, little snowflakes here and there... Not a lot of students had stayed in the castle, barely ten for each House. As they ate slowly, not talking, the owls arrived, most of them carrying packages from their family. An owl dropped the Daily Prophet in front of Ron, startling him a bit as he was looking through the present Mrs. Weasley had sent him.

"Can I have look?" asked Hermione, pointing to the newspaper.

Ron looked up. Hermione had finished unwrapping her presents, mostly books, a bit of jewelry and some other things.

"Of course!"

As she started to read the headlines, he finished his inspection of the package, there was the traditional jumper, quite a lot of sweets, a poster of the Chudley Canons and some pranks material from George and Fred. The twins had also added another presents.



Quickly Ron tore up the wrapping paper and his jaw fell on the floor. The twins had bought him new dress robes. They were a deep midnight blue with a shimmering hem.

"How did they find the money to buy me these," he whispered in awe. "They must have cost a fortune!"

Hermione broke his thoughts.

"Ron! Ron! Listen!" she whispered excitedly. *"A curious event took place this night. A bit after midnight, the dragon tamers reported a strange behavior of these creatures. They sprang in the air and started howling, flying wildly everywhere. Oblivators had a hard job erasing everything from the hundreds of Muggles who noticed this. This behavior was observed all over the world, all the dragons seemed affected and the scientists remained puzzled by this. "We don't have any explanation of these happenings. It remains a complete mystery." Asked about it, several tamers reported that "the dragons seemed in deep pain". The different ministries are trying to find some reasons, explaining this. Some thought it was in relation with a mysterious magical surge of power which was observed in the north in the middle of the ocean, dismissed as an experience of the Sea people. Asked about it, they denied having something to do with it. The mystery remains whole."*

"That's strange..."

"Yeah, I wonder what the cause of all of this was; do you think it has anything to do with You-know-who?"

"Maybe..." answered Ron, going back to his breakfast, not really concerned by this, after all, it was Charlie's department, not his.

They finished their breakfast before going to see Hagrid. They spent their morning at his hut, just talking. The half-giant was quite interested by the article on the dragons. All in all the holidays passed quickly and soon the work started again, this time the teachers being way more stressed as the O.L.W.S were approaching. Hermione had started to study early, earning a "crazy girl" from Ron.



At the end of January, strange events started to take place. It started with a break-in a Muggle museum. The odd thing being that the alarms hadn't been triggered, the doors, bars and all the system of security hadn't been forced. The cameras had spotted nothing. The Muggle newspaper was qualifying these stole of magical. The burglars had only taken one thing: an old bracelet which had been found in an Aztec temple. The bracelet was covered with signs and drawing the archaeologists hadn't been able to decipher. A few gems had been decorating the jewel but their place on it had been a subject of controversy as they seemed to have been put on it without any thinking.

This was the first of a long series of break-ins: several Muggle museums saw one their piece disappeared: an Egyptian amulet, a Phoenician cup, a Roman dagger... But universities were also targets: several old parchments disappeared as well as a few manuscripts.

Even the Ministries had seen some of their documents disappearing, though this fact had been carefully hidden.

Hermione and Ron, like most of the believer of Voldemort's return, were believing that this was the parts of a gigantic plan and therefore, deep researches were made on the objects and manuscripts, with no success...

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Hope you like it! Thanks again for the review!

Naia



## **Chapter Seven**

"That was amazing!" said Teneb in a whisper.

"So the human is worth the attention of an elf? ..."

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Teneb flushed at Harry's sarcasm.

"Well... I..."

He was dumbfounded by the difference in the human's behavior. He didn't act shy or scared at all. Teneb's confusion must have appeared on his face as Harry's smirk deepened.

"Cat got your tongue?"

"I..."

Harry grew fed up with Teneb's hesitations. Better get this over with, and the sooner, the better. His lack of sleep for the past few nights was getting on his nerves. Sure, it was nothing like what he had experienced during the first days of his stay apparently during those days, Voldemort must have dealt with some failures or traitors, as his scar had been throbbing. Then there had been a period of complete calm and two months ago, his scar had begun to twitch, preventing him from getting a whole-night's rest.

"What do you want?" he asked shortly.

The sudden question surprised Teneb, as well as the harshness audible in it. He reflected a few seconds on what to ask.

"Was it you?"

"Who?"

"You know what I mean! Was it you?"

"Sorry, but contrary to some of the people here, I don't have the ability to read minds..."



Teneb could see he was playing with him and enjoying every moment of it.. Torn between his pride and his curiosity, Teneb didn't know what to do play his game or have it his own way... Finally his curiosity won out.

"Was it you who has been practicing here every morning?" he asked slowly, as if he was talking to a baby.

"Does it matter?"

Teneb was beginning to become fed up with the human. His eyes flashed angrily.

"Just answer the damn question! It's not difficult: you just have to say yes or no!"

Harry just smirked, something which angered Teneb a great deal.

"What would be the point of answering a question whose answer you already know? And why do you want to know?"

Silence was his only answer.

See, what'll you do with this information? Nothing. So why should I answer you?"

"Well, I don't know, but..."

"So you don't know what you'll do with it, but still want to know... Isn't it a bit ironical?"

"ANSWER!"

"You already know the answer or you wouldn't be here this morning."

Teneb's anger was increasing. He couldn't believe the human had the guts to stand up to him! He would have expected him to answer straight away. He was used to having people following his lead. His father was the elf King counselor and Teneb had been brought up with the prince, spending all his time at the court with prince Celen. Later when his royal friend would be crowned, he would become his



counselor. It was a well known fact and nobody ever dared to cross him. Most of the people liked him, though some were jealous, but nobody really hated him.

"What's with you! Couldn't you give a straight answer, or is it too much to ask?"

Harry's eyes flashed before going back to their amused state.

"And what's with you, meddling in things which don't concern you in the slightest!"

Teneb was taken aback by this.

"I..."

"Now, the only important thing we have to sort out before parting is, what are you going to do?" asked Harry out of the blue, his blank green eyes looking intensely at Teneb.

"Well, I don't know... Anyway, why does it matter?"

Harry threw him a look that clearly stated, Are-you-dumb-or-are-you-doing-this-on-purpose?

"Think, Teneb the elf, think, do you think these so-called masters would be very happy to know I can fight and I've reached a good level of magic WITHOUT their help? Do you think they'll be delighted? Not mentioning I've been riding Shadow, something I wasn't allowed to do! So, once again, what are you going to do?"

Teneb remained silent, trying to register everything Harry had said. The young wizard sighed.

"Well, I'll really appreciate it if you could remain silent about this." His voice was quite harsh.

"And if I don't?" cut Teneb, not really appreciating being ordered around.



"Then I'll make you. A simple memory charm and you won't remember anything..."

Teneb laughed loudly. Memory charms? No danger there, elves were immune to them and he himself had built a strong resistance to nearly all the curses, hexes and charms involving manipulation of the memory...

"Are you really stupid human? Human memory charms don't work on elves! Practically none of the memory charms work on us anyway."

"Really? And what about the Oufora charm?" said Harry with a knowing grin.

Teneb paled.

"H- How could you know that charm!" he stuttered.

"So, you know it too... Quite useful charm, isn't it? It will wipe a selective part of your memory and work on everybody, whatever species he is from meaning humans, elves, magis, elementals..."

"I know that! But How. Do. You. Know. It? This is one of the most guarded secret of the elves..."

"I have my sources."

Harry grinned mentally, he wouldn't be able to thank Arxeren enough for teaching him this charm... And the look on the elf's face was priceless!

Teneb remained silent for a few seconds. Was the human bluffing? Or was he serious? On the one hand, he didn't want to submit to the human, but on the other hand, there was the risk of being on the receiving hand of an Oufora charm.

"Alright, I'll keep my mouth shut about it."

"Good." Harry nodded and turned on his heel, heading for his horse, who had been waiting for its rider.



"Hey! Wait!" shouted Teneb, suddenly grabbing Harry by his arm from behind.

Wrong move.

Before he realized it, he was on his back, seeing little stars dancing around his head... .

Harry looked at him a bit apologetically. From his training with Arxeren, he had developed strong defensive reflexes. "Constant Vigilance!" Moody's phrase was somewhat one of the spirit guardian's first rules. And, although he was restraining them during the day as it would look suspicious if he was to block every attack thrown his way, he had them running high in the morning, the evening and the night. Deciding to be civil he pulled out his hand to help the elf.

"Sorry about that, but you shouldn't jump on people like that..."

Teneb was starring wide-eyed at him, speechless. He prided himself on being able to stand up to nearly every kind of situation, and this human and brought him to the ground in seconds! That wasn't right!

"H-How did you get THAT strong?" he asked incredulously, dismissing the hand that was offering to help him and getting up himself.

Harry's features hardened at being rejected. He whirled on his heels and walked to his horse.

"None of your concern!"

But the Elf didn't give up. He quickly caught up with Harry and stopped him, grabbing his arm.

"How!"

Become fed up with this, Harry chose to answer, so he would leave him.

"I trained."



"With who?" asked immediately Teneb, curiosity getting the best of him.

"If I answer you, would you leave me alone?" sighed Harry, annoyed.

"Deal. Now, who?"

"My spirit guardian."

There was a silence during which Harry was slowly counting down in his head. *Five, Four, Three, Two, One...*

"YOUR SPIRIT GUARDIAN!"

Right in time.

"Do you have some hearing problems?"

"How could you have managed to find your spirit guardian? You can't even manage to enter a right trance and Nerthor told us it would take nearly a year and a half before finding our guardian."

"Who said he had to be right?"

"He is a master!"

"Doesn't mean he knows everything."

"But..."

"There is no but. If you don't believe me, alright, I don't care, now, could you let go of my wrist."

Teneb realized he hadn't released the human's arm. He was about to do it, but something caught his attention. He tightened his grip and narrowed his eyes. Sure, there was no mistake. He could clearly see the crescent moon scars on both wrists. He looked up at the human who was now expressionless, his face not giving away his emotions.

"How did you get those?" Teneb knew this question was stupid even before he asked it.



The look on the human's face went from expressionless to icy.

"What does it look like to you?"

Teneb was stunned.

"How?... why would you do something that stupid!"

He knew immediately it hadn't been the smartest thing to say.

"Stupid!" repeated Harry, showing for the first time some emotions: disbelief, but also anger. Then he laughed, a harsh, bitter laugh.

"You, of all the people, ask me why I did it!" His disbelief was replaced by restrained anger. "Well, think and guess."

Harry walked away and jumped on Shadow. Before leaving, he turned to look down at Teneb.

"By the way, I have a name."

With this, he disappeared.

Teneb stood there, quite shocked, not knowing what to think. His mind was a mess. Slowly he went back to his horse and headed to the headquarters.

During the whole day, he couldn't concentrate. He kept wondering about the human's last sentences.

Throughout the day, Teneb watched, trying to decipher, with no real success, the mystery of the human. *Not the human*, he thought, *he has a name*. He remembered it being said the first day and a few times in the following week, but after that he had always been the human. What was it? Julian? No. Kev? No. Alan? No, no...

He looked several times his way, trying to find answers to the many questions which were circling in his mind. His teachers noticed he was a bit distracted but dismissed it. They all had a soft spot for the young elf and never got him into trouble.



Harry carefully avoided him for the whole day, but unfortunately, couldn't avoid the teachers and the other students. The day passed as slowly as usual and he acted like he always did, faking weakness, clumsiness, fear and everything which was expected from him by teachers or students. He would endure this, but once his training would be over, he'd have a few things to say to a few people here, before leaving. At the end of the day, he quickly left after having eaten a bit.

He could feel Teneb's gaze on him as he passed through the doors. He shrugged, went to his dorm, put the usual illusions on his bed, plus a few charms in case the students had the lovely idea to play a few tricks on him, thinking he was sleeping. He dressed, took his weapons and slipped outside.

He spent the evening and a part of the night training. He liked to train at dusk and in the dark. Arxeren was pleased with his improvements. He was becoming better and better with his sword, he could control fire and wandless magic was now coming naturally to him. The only weak point was archery. His aim wasn't bad, but it was average. He had started on healing methods and animagus transformation.

Teneb couldn't sleep; he was tossing back and forth in his bed. Around midnight, he heard small creaks signaling the hum... no, Harry's return. He raised his head to try to see him, but to no avail. He seemed to blend in with the shadows...

He had found the human's name on the shelves where the lists of the students were put. These lists were updated each time new students entered the headquarters.

Moments later, he heard his bed creak and a sigh. Teneb laid back. Why had he tried to kill himself? What could have pushed him to that point?

He kept thinking about that for a big part of the night, when, finally it clicked.

The joy of finding why was soon replaced by a mixed feeling. It wasn't really heavy guilt. Sure, he was guilty, a bit, but he was also shocked.



He tried to persuade himself that it wasn't true, it was impossible! Elves wouldn't do that...

If there was one thing the elves were proud about, it was the fact that they had never purposely hurt a living creature for the pleasure to hurt. But, if this was true, then... No, it couldn't be! It wasn't possible... he cast a look in the direction of the human's bed. But Teneb couldn't dismiss the evidence, he had tried to kill himself... Why? Surely being a bit pushed around couldn't have led him to suicide... It was way too drastic... It was then that Teneb decided to do something he knew would regret.

Slowly, he sat on his bed, falling into a meditating stance. He slowed his breath and tried to project his mind towards the sleeping figure. Teneb was proud of his mind-reading capacities from what Nerthor had told him, he was one of the most powerful telepaths here. And he prided himself with being able to go through any spirits. But this time, he felt like he had hit a wall.

He withdrew himself a bit and opened his spirit senses. He could sense a powerful shield around the mind of the human, hiding his thoughts. He tried to find a weak part but had no success. He then decided to try another approach. He gathered all his power and threw it all on the shield, trying to break it. For a few moments, nothing happened. He continued to apply the pressure and suddenly felt a crack.

He stopped immediately. Slowly he slipped through the mental crack and accessed the mind of the human. He was overwhelmed with pictures, sounds at first. Blocking everything, he started to look for the right memories. Looking around he saw that most of Harry's memories were now hidden, surely a defensive reflex... Finally, he found what he wanted: memories of his stay here. Surprisingly, they weren't hidden like the others. He started to read them...

Minutes later, he came back to his own mind, completely confused. He couldn't believe what he had seen! It was impossible! Elves wouldn't behave like that! Lost, he finally went to sleep. But it wasn't an easy sleep, as he was still trying to register and accept what he



had seen. He decided to go to the hill in a few hours, as it was nearly 2 a.m...

[illegible]

A few hours later he was awake, mostly thanks to a small energy charm and getting ready. He quickly equipped his horse and galloped to the hill. There he saw the human, sitting on the ground, his legs and arms crossed, a look of deep concentration upon his face. He was sweating a bit and his eyebrows were furrowed.

He was a few meters away, when Harry's eyes snapped wide opened and looked sharply at him.

"You came back? I thought I made myself clear..." His voice was harsh and Teneb could see he was annoyed. He ignored it.

"Would it do some good if I apologized?"

Harry narrowed his eyes.

"Not really, because you're not really meaning it. You're not sorry for what you and your friends, as well the teachers and the riders did to *me*, but for the fact they broke one of your principles."

"You're perceptive."

"I have to be."

There was a silence.

"What do you want?" asked Harry sharply.

Tened bit his lower lip. Was he that predictable?

"Why are you asking that?" he asked, hesitating a bit.

"If I've learned one thing here it's that Elves wouldn't associate with humans if their lives depended on it, unless they had something to gain. Now would you answer me or leave me alone?"



"Would you help me with my training?" asked Teneb. For once, he was happy to see the human looking quite startled. Harry blinked a few times.

"You're joking!" He spluttered.

"I am not."

"You must have hit your head pretty bad yesterday if you're asking me this," retorted Harry. "Teneb, the teachers' pet, the future king's counselor, the one always given as an example, is asking the mere human I am, the clumsy, weak, foolish human to help him with his training? Excuse me, but don't you think there is a slight mistake in this sentence?"

"Not really. You can help me, so why not ask?"

"Sorry, but there's a catch. Look, on the one hand you have a respected and privileged student, praised by the whole faculty, and on the other, you have someone who had been either ignored completely or persecuted by his fellow classmates, humiliated by the teachers and riders... Do I have to spell it out to you?"

Teneb gave him an annoyed look which Harry was only too happy to return.

"What, would it bother you?"

This was too much for Harry. The young elf was definitively way too full of himself! Here he comes ordering him to help him...

"One word: No. Now leave me alone."

Teneb was stunned, but quickly grinned.

"I don't think you have much of a choice."

"I seem to recall having told you to leave."

"Not until you agree to help me."

"Then I hope you're patient, because I won't."



"Think about this: either you help me, or I'll make sure you never end your training and leave this place. Moreover, I'm sure the riders would be delighted to know that you've been riding Shadow without permission and will forbid you the access to the paddock..."

All annoyance or amusement was gone from Harry's eyes. He clutched to the necklace the Dragon had given him. He had disguised it to be a simple golden necklace. Whenever he touched it, it always calmed him and cleared his spirit. He had also discovered that, in time of need, he could contact Arxeren through the necklace.

Slowly he calmed down, and, eyed Teneb icily.

"You know that I could simply wipe out any memories you have of this."

"You could, but then your secret would be out of the woods... I'm recording this with a useful little charm on a crystal in one of my friends drawers... sure you know about it: The Tranmesnil ?"

There was a silence, and Teneb was hoping that Harry would buy it. Truth be told, he hadn't done that charm, he was just bluffing. Harry clenched his fists.

"So blackmail is it?" growled Harry.

"Blackmail is such a vile word. I prefer... exchange of services. You help me and I keep your secret quiet."

Harry grit his teeth. Damn him! He should have been more careful!

"Alright," he said tensely, "I'll help you."

"I want a magical binding contract."

Grudgingly, Harry submit to the formalities of the binding contract: it consisted of putting a charm on both the people agreeing to this type of contract. If one of them was to break it, he would be stripped of his or her powers for ten years.



Once it was done, They stood face to face. Finally, Harry broke the silence and coldly looked at Teneb. The elf could see a boiling and restrained anger in the deep green eyes, nearly given them a strange glow.

"Well, I'll show you how to meet your spirit guardian, he will take care of you as mine is doing. Or trying to, at least..."

Hey! I heard that!

I thought you were gone! I've been trying to contact you for ages!

I was chatting with a friend...

How many times must I remember you that you finding a girlfriend will happen the day Hell freezes over!

And why, may I ask?

You're too damn annoying for them to support...

I'll take that as a compliment coming from you... just so you know, I'm quite the ladies-man...

Yeah right, and modest too... And what's her name?

I think your little friend is waiting for you...

Changing the subject are we?

Oh shut up and deal with him! I don't know why I put up with you!

That's why you love me!

I give up!

Harry smiled mentally, but kept his cold facade.

Teneb had been looking at him, expectantly.

"Alright, we have an other hour before we need to go back to headquarters. So listen carefully, because I won't repeat it twice..."



Then in cool tone, he explained to the young elf how to reach his guardian. He was confident that he would do it in less than an hour. He knew Teneb was quite skilled in Mind Magic, so it wouldn't be too hard for him to do it...

Indeed, half an hour later, Teneb met his guardian.

Harry knew it, thanks to his huge smile and the fact that Arxeren had told him.

"Good, now your guardian will help you," he said, unsheathing his sword. He still had half an hour to train, as his dragon-guardian was happy to remind him. He didn't give Teneb a second thought, knowing the elf would spend the the following time getting acquainted with his guardian.

When time to leave came, he approached Teneb and shook him.

"We need to go."

He climbed on Shadow, seeing the elf doing the same. They rode back to the headquarters as they parted before reaching the building, Harry turned to Teneb.

"I'm at the Hill from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. Come if you want." He walked a few steps away before stopping again.

"Oh, and if you ever read my thoughts without my permission, you'll regret it."

Teneb was left alone, looking completely bewildered.

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Thanks again for the reviews

Phoenix of Light : Thanks a lot ! For romance, well I'll see later in the story if I should put some. I don't want to ruin the plot by putting unnecessary romance. I prefer H/Hr too but I don't mind others and i'm not sure if this pairing would work in this story. I don't know what



pairing I'll use in this story if I decide to put some romance. For now, I don't think romance could fit in this plot.

not fully human : Thank you for your review. I quite agree with you. I wanted to ask something, Apparently there is something about the elves in "Magical Beast and Where to find them". Could tell me what it says, I don't have this book.... It would really help me if I knew what it says. I hope this doesn't bother you....

ADJ: Thanks a lot, I'll try to keep this story original.... As for your requests: well I update as soon as I can. I have to continue with my other stories and keep up with my studies. As the end of the term was approaching, our teachers loaded us with homework and tests. And for the second one, well, Harry won't suddenly fogive everything, and became Teneb best friend! It wouldn't logical....



## Chapter Eight.

Harry sped towards the headquarters. Stupid, stupid, stupid!

I couldn't agree more. It was quite dumb to let him know who you are.

Oh, stop it; I didn't do it on purpose!

If you had been more careful with this arrow, he wouldn't have found out!

Spare me the lecture, will you? You have already made your point.

I have?

Yes, and believe me, having an insane spirit yelling as loud as he can in your head isn't what I call fun...

You deserved it!

I think I got the point when you called me: "a stupid careless little boy with as much attention and focus as a baby troll."

I'll have to remember that phrase...

Harry rolled his eyes.

And don't roll your eyes at me, I may be a spirit but I'm not blind and dumb!

Forgive me, O Great one.

Flattery won't do any good.

It can't hurt to try.

I give up!

That's the tenth time you've said that...

Oh, shut up!



Chuckling lightly, Harry arrived at Shadow's paddock, dismounted the stallion, and took care of him before heading to his first lesson.

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Harry's routine hadn't changed a lot; he still went to the Hill at the same times. The only change was Teneb's presence. He had hoped that having to wake up at three thirty each morning would put its strain on him, but no! He had to admit that the elf was persevering. The young wizard was startled out of his musings by Efilin's yells

"Human!"

The familiar cry of the fighting master echoed in the now silent room.

Harry didn't even bother to look his way. He knew, too well, the master's rant.

"Yes, master?" he asked in a dull voice, his eyes still on the sword he was polishing.

"I asked you to order the swords by their length! Not by their properties! I also remember telling you to clean and polish them!"

"But I did, master."

"Do you call that polished?" he bellowed

This time, Harry looked up at the elf. Effilin had a long sword. The ornate handle was heavily encrusted gems that glinted at Harry as the sword Master waved it in front of him. Harry had two choices: he could either answer the man and aggravate his situation further, or remain silent.

The second option was safer. At least the elf wouldn't be able to rant on his insolence if he kept his mouth shut. Moreover, he knew this sword was polished.

"Well, I'm waiting... What do you have to say about his?"

Harry remained silent.



"ANSWER ME!"

Silence.

Harry knew he was upsetting Effilin; but he was upsetting him only by being here, so why bother answering?

Suddenly there was a loud CLANG as the sword fell to the floor and he felt himself being lifted by his collar. His green eyes met the steel-blue eyes of the teacher.

"You'll answer me when I address you, human."

Harry only nodded.

"I'll not tolerate your cheek in this classroom. Now pick up this sword."

Harry hesitated, not wanting to kneel before this man.

"NOW!"

Harry!

Arxeren's mental interference brought him to his senses and he took the sword. It wasn't as heavy as his own, though a little longer.

"Face me."

Harry looked questioningly at the elf, who was smirking. The fighting master turned to look at the other students.

"Now watch carefully and learn how to handle a human in combat. Even if this one must be one of the weaker of his race, he's still a human."

Harry gritted his teeth.

"Bow."

Harry complied and fell in a clumsy stance.



"Did I teach you nothing human?" Effilin addressed the remaining students. "Look at his stance, the first flaw of a human is his stance and the second is his balance."

For the following minutes he went on, singling out and exaggerating all the flaws that could be found in humans, while refusing to recognise any good qualities.

During those minutes, Harry let himself be smashed by the elf, knowing that he would have his revenge one day.

Finally Effilin stopped as Harry fell to the floor once again, with the master's sword pointed to his throat.

"Get up! Daryn, did you understand what I said?"

The Elves, Magis and Elementals nodded, smirking. Teneb forced himself to give a superior smirk at Harry's defeat.

Effilin turned to Harry and threw his sword at him.

"Clean this one! That's all you're good for. Your parents must have been two worthless, good for nothing, feeble humans to have a son like you."

"They're dead." Harry cut in with a growl, in fists clenched around the handle of the sword, his eyes blazing.

"Probably of shame."

Harry's knuckles were now white. His emerald eyes were turning an unnatural shade of green; not the usual deep emerald or dark green, but blazing, hypnotising green you could nearly see a fire in them.

Harry! Calm down immediately!

Harry's mind was foggy, blinded by anger. He could accept taunts and insults thrown at him, he could handle being persecuted by Elves, Magis and Elementals with an attitude problem, but he would NOT allow his parents to be tainted by this.



His grip on the sword hilt tightened so much, that the muscles in his arm began to shake slightly. He was slowly losing control: the room started to grow warmer.

HARRY!

This time, Arxeren's yell reached his mind and made him cool down a bit.

What! He yelled back, every bit as angry as he had ever been.

Snap out of this, you can't afford to lose your control!

But... he...

You'll kick his ass later, don't blow your cover because of him! Don't give him the satisfaction.

Slowly, Harry calmed down, taking slow, deep breaths and allowing Arxeren's voice to drown out the still-ranting elf.

When he had nearly come back to his senses, another comment of the master made his anger go haywire.

"But then, it's a blessing that the world is now rid of their taint..."

Harry...

Grasping at the thinly won restraint on his temper, he dropped the sword on the floor and walked out of the room, ignoring the sword master's yells and the stares of the other students.

Once outside, he ran. He ran as fast and as far as he could letting the physical exertion wipe away the anger that had gripped him.

He found himself at the cliff.

There, he gathered his power and let his anger out. Blazing flames suddenly surrounded him. An explosion echoed off the surrounding hills, then everything went blank for a few minutes.



Once he came to himself again, he looked around, taking in the blackened circle that surrounded him, still quite dazed. His mind refused to register what he had just done; it was still focused on the words that Effilin spat at him.

Teneb watched Harry leave until the door swung closed behind him, then turned and watched as Effilin continued in his temper tantrum. The elf was getting redder and redder and Teneb was afraid that he might explode. He turned again to the door that Harry had stormed through. This was the first time he had seen the human that angry. The fighting teacher must have hit a nerve.

While the master was still ranting on about Harry, he looked down at the sword that the young human had dropped, picked it up and immediately dropped it again with a hiss. The weapon was burning, as if it had been set on fire. He silently cast a quick cooling spell on the sword, before picking it up again. He immediately noticed something odd about the handle. There was a handprint. It seemed that the metal had melted under the fingers of the one holding it.

Teneb furrowed his brows, trying to understand, when it hit him. The human had control over fire! That was it! He cast a glance at Effilin and shook his head; the sword master had been lucky not to have been fried on the spot. Fire was quite unpredictable as were the people controlling it and they had a tendency to have very short tempers. He himself knew an elf with the power of fire, and had learned very early not to anger him.

He hid the sword, not wanting the others to find out about some of the human's abilities. After all, he had a contract to fulfill.

They didn't do anything else in that lesson, as Effilin was still ranting on about how low humans were.

Teneb couldn't help being a bit confused by what the master was saying. There was quite a difference between what he was being told by his teachers, friends, parents and elders, and what he knew Harry to be capable of. The human was hiding his true self, and Teneb couldn't get rid of the doubts that had started to grow in him; especially after seeing some of Harry's memories.



You're done now?

A grim silence answered the spirit guardian.

Harry, I know you hear me; so answer this instant!

Alright, alright!

Finally, so are you done with your 'let's wallow in self-pity'-time?

No.

Too bad for you.

And why is that?

One word: training.

This made Harry even angrier.

I'm tired of it! That's all I've been doing: wake up, eat breakfast, train, get yelled at, get humiliated, eat lunch, more humiliation and more yelling, eat dinner, train, and sleep! I'm sick of it! I quit!

Do you really want to quit?

Sigh Yes.

Well in that case, I'll leave you. I just wanted to tell you we were going to start on spirit-talking, but seeing that you want to quit, I'll respect your wishes. It's been good knowing you Harry.

The spirit's voice started to fade.

Wait!

He knew the spirit had been baiting him, but he wanted to be sure.

What did you say?

What? Me?



No the Queen of England! Of course you!

But I thought you wanted to quit?

Don't play with me Arxeren...

May I remind you that I'm a spirit, therefore you can't harm me.

Arxeren...

What?

Alright! I'm sorry! Happy? I'm sorry I yelled at you.

You'd better be.

... But in nearly nine months, I haven't talked with one person who knew my name, and didn't consider me dirt. You have to admit it's not something which is going to improve my social skills.

If you had any to begin with!

Thank you for that, but could you stop interrupting me when I'm trying to make a point?

Not if you allow yourself to wallow in self-pity.

Thanks a lot, you're being very helpful...

You're doing a good enough job at devaluing yourself without me, why should I help you?

There was a small moment of silence.

Alright.

Now that you've come back to your senses, I'll explain.

I'm listening.



Alright, as I was saying before, I was about to introduce you to spirit talking: mainly, you have to access the second plane.

Second plane?

They really teach you nothing in class.

I won't even bother answering this...

To sum it up, unless you want the three-hour explanation, there are three planes: this one, the Spirit plane; the second one: the Soul plane; and the third, the Magic plane.

Sorry to cut in, but what's the difference between them?

You're way too curious. Well, the Spirit plane is where you are presently. It's the first plane, accessible to those who train their mind enough. In this plane, you find the guardians.

Care to elaborate?

Well, to put it simply, a guardian isn't really an outside thing that chooses you. It's a part of you. It's your personality that shapes your guardian. It'll take the form that suits you the best.

So spirits don't really exist?

No, you misunderstood me; we are part of the magic of life, of the Nature, of the living. Each of us has different characteristics. When someone reaches the plane, he links with the spirit holding the abilities he needs and gives shape to his guardian.

What shape was yours the last time you were linked to someone?

A monkey...Don't laugh! It's not funny!

Harry did laugh, despite Arxern's warning, something which would have seemed strange if someone had been around him at that time.

Sorry, he wiped some tears, But a monkey?



I didn't ask for it...however, I must say that I'm pleased with this form; it's the second time I've been a dragon, but the first time I've become a Sowaroclast time I was an Azurean.

You're welcome. But I don't think a dragon is the form that suits me the best...

What did I say earlier about devaluing yourself? The only one allowed to do that is me!

Since when?

Since now!

Hold your horses!

If you weren't so thick-headed, I'd...

Alright, I know this, you've said it quite a few times since I've known you, so spare me the full speech. Now, what were you saying about the planes?

Nice try, but we'll speak about it later; to come back at the subject at hand, the second plane is the Soul plane. There, you'll find the souls of the dead, except those of the ones who dedicated themselves to Darkness. Those are damned and have to wander eternally in the Shadow realm, never finding peace.

The third plane, is the Magic plane. Basically, it's where the primary forces of nature, and life reside. Few can access this plane, it's almost impossible, except for the Chosen Ones.

Who?

None of your business for now.

Tell me!

Do you want to learn how to reach the Soul plane or not?

All right all right, I'm listening, but we'll talk about this later.



Finally! And quit using my own words against me.

Silence.

Alright, all you have to do is...

It took Arxeren ten minutes to explain how to do it. Then, he had to re-explain it, as Harry hadn't understood the whole concept.

For the following hour they just practiced it. Harry didn't go to his lessons that day, knowing he would pay for it. Demenor wouldn't hear of it, but the teachers would punish him for defying their authority.

Harry didn't go to lunch or dinner either, using the food he had stored in case something like this happened. At the end of the night training sessions, just before Harry left, Arxeren suddenly grew serious.

Harry, I trained you in most of the fields that you will need to become a full master. You have mastered most of them, with the exception of archery and some specific techniques, not to mention strategy; but you won't progress to a higher level if you continue to practice alone.

I can practice with dummies...

No, fighting with a dummy and fighting with a real person is quite different. You program the dummy, you can predict its actions, but in front of a real adversary, would you be able to do so? Would you be able to read his face, his body, to know what his next move would be?

Well...

You couldn't, people aren't born with it. True, some are more perceptive, but you have to train your senses to spot the smallest twitches, the lightest shudders, and the changes in the attitude that would give away your opponent's decisions.

Alright, alright, O wise one, spare me the lecture. Just one question, could you give the name of one person, living on this island that would willingly agree to train with me?



At a loss of words?

There is the elf that tricked you into helping him.

You know, I've always known you weren't really sane, but now I'm sure of it. You're completely nuts! Sure, I'll go to him and I'll say: 'Hey Teneb, would you like to practice with me?' And he'll answer: 'Sure, no problem!' Yeah, right!

Why not? He's ambitious and wants to become powerful. He knows who you are, and what better way to progress than practical fighting? I'll arrange it with his guardian, all you have to do is bring the subject up.

Thanks a lot, like I don't have enough to do.

Like I said, you bring the subject up and I'll arrange things with his guardian.

His guardian?

Yes, The cool thing is that she is a dragon too, Kaelia... Arxeren stumbled a little, realising his mistake, Guardians' forms were to remain unknown to everybody, except those they were linked to.

Harry felt a probe on his mind.

What are you doing?

I'm sorry, Harry, but you can't remember that... Arxeren pushed a bit more and Harry's mental figure stilled for a few seconds, his mouth opened in protest, his eyes dazed. Then the young wizard blinked and sent a smirk at his guardian.

First name basis and a date? Is there something you wish to tell me?

Well, it's not my fault that I'm a charmer. Had he been a real creature, Arxeren would have taken a relieved breath.

Yeah right, should I call you Gilderoy from now on?

No thank you, I like my name.



You're sure?

100 sure.

Well, if you don't mind, I'll go to bed. I think tomorrow will be an eventful day.

Seeing how you acted with the elf, and the fact that you didn't go to any of your classes today, you could say that.

Thank you for that reminder.

You're welcome.

Well, I'll go now, good night, if there's a night in your plane.

See you tomorrow morning at 4 a.m. sharp.

I was hoping you'd forget about that...

Not a chance.

Harry shook his head and headed back to the Headquarters, pondering the day's events. He hadn't been able to reach the second plane, but Arxeren had told him he was doing great. Soon, he hoped, he'd be able to talk to his parents...

But before he could reach the Headquarters, he fell on his knees, his scar burning, threatening to split his head. The pain grew, his head was on fire, and he felt like somebody was digging a knife in his forehead.

Finally he blacked out, not able to bear the pain any longer.

Albus Dumbledore was standing in front of the window in his office, absently stroking Fawkes' head. Sensing his master's sorrow, the phoenix gave a questioning shrill.

Sighing, the old man took his eyes off the landscape before him. "I don't know Fawkes. I think that the Light is weakening each day. It's time for the Order to gather again."



The phoenix bowed his head.

The Headmaster went to one side of his office, before a sculpture of the school's crest. In the center, a star was carved, within its center a rune nobody had been able to decipher. Albus placed his hand on it, and the phoenix flew to his shoulder, starting to sing: not the usual song, but more like a summons.

The star and Dumbledore's hand glowed golden and slowly, little dots lightened on the crest, growing more and more numerous as minutes passed. Finally, as the crest was nearly covered by the luminous dots, Fawkes stopped his song.

Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling as he looked at the crest.

"Well, perhaps the Light isn't as weakened as I thought it was." He sent a thought through his hand: "Tomorrow, Hogwarts, the Phoenix's Nest, midnight. Apparate."

Once it was done, he withdrew his hand and the light slowly disappeared.

"Now, my friend, we wait."

In the Gryffindor's common room Ron and Hermione were sitting at a table in a corner of the room, silently working on their homework.

Hermione was engrossed in the reading of a thick book, entitled, *'Magical artifacts and their meanings'*, while Ron was taking notes on another called *'Muggle and magical artifacts: what are their uses?'*

This had come as a shock for those who knew the two. Seeing Hermione reading non-compulsory books was normal, but Ron doing it? That was another story.

Before them, parchments, covered with writing, diagrams, and drawings were sprawled on the table.

Since the beginning of the burglaries, soon after Christmas, they had tried to find a pattern in them, a motive, or a link between the stolen artifacts.



There had been ten artifacts stolen from muggle museums:

The Sun's bracelet, an Aztec jewel, found on the sculpture of one of the main Aztec gods, symbolizing the sun.

The Desert's burn, an Egyptian amulet, dedicated to Seth's cult.

The cup of Ern, which had been owned by a powerful Phoenician mage.

Neron's dagger, which was the one he killed many people with.

Maya's Heart, which was a big ruby, it was used by Maya to store the energy of the people they sacrificed.

The Dragon eye, a Chinese crystal ball, said to show the destiny of its holder, if he had enough power.

Herakles' bow and arrows. Well, the Muggles thought they were ordinary weapons, but they were Herakles'.

Attila's sword.

The Shadow's knife, used by torturers back in the Romans' time.

An African mask, picturing a war god, the Mask of the Summons.

Along with all of this, there were all the manuscripts taken from universities and from the Ministry. But all they knew about this was that it was old books of prophecies, or indecipherable parchment, giving vague indication and warning against the rise of the Basilisk and asking to look for the Dragon.

Ron sighed. He was getting nowhere.

"Hermione, I need a break. Why don't we go to visit Hagrid? It's been a long time since we last saw him."

"What? Oh! Alright, let me finish this chapter."

"OK, I'll get our cloaks."



"See you in a minute."

Minutes later, they were heading for the hut.

They knocked on the door. The booming voice of Hagrid answered them.

"Come in!"

They opened the door and stepped inside.

Hagrid was feeding Fang in a corner.

"Hermione! Ron!"

"Hello Hagrid," said Hermione, taking her cloak off and putting it on the back of a chair.

"Do you want some tea? Or some cakes, I've just made a batch of my marble cakes."

"Just tea, thank you."

"You're welcome," answered the semi-giant, while putting three cups on the table and pouring tea in them. "How're you doing?"

"Well, the teachers are going crazy with the coming NEWTs, and Snape is nastier than ever," Ron replied, earning a good kick in his leg for the last bit.

Hagrid looked closely at Ron.

"I wouldn't say this normally, but don't be too quick to judge Snape. He has had a lot on his plate lately." Seeing Ron was ready to argue, he continued. "Don't get me wrong here, it's not a reason to lay his frustrations and stress on you, but try to understand him."

Before Ron replied, Hermione spoke up.

"Have you heard about the burglaries?"

"Yeah, quite mysterious, isn't it?"



"Yes. Do you think it's linked to You-Know-Who?"

"I'll be ready to bet everything I have that it is."

"Really?" Ron cut in.

"Yes, it reminds me of what happened forty years ago. What was the name of that man...Ah yes, a wizard named Doeron tried to gather several artifacts. All were involved in a ritual. I think he managed to obtain four of the six needed for it before he was arrested. The artifacts were sent back to their owners and nobody heard of it."

"How do you know it then?"

"Well, Dumbledore sent me to bring one of them to a museum, I think it was called the Cup of Ern."

At this Hermione and Ron focused all their attention on him.

"Really, and why did he needed those artifacts?"

"Nobody really found out. All I can say is that it was really dark and had powerful magic and that it would have brought chaos on earth. He left a few notes in London's university of Occult Sciences."

Hermione cast a quick glance at Ron. This had been one of the first universities to which the thieves had gone.

"Is there a link?" asked Hermione eagerly.

"I don't think so, there were only six artifacts needed, and this time, ten have disappeared."

"Well, thank you Hagrid, it's been really nice talking to you, but we must go now, we still have a lot of homework to do," she said.

"Yes, thanks a lot for the tea, Hagrid," added Ron.

"It's alright, come back soon."

"We will. Bye Hagrid," said Hermione, putting her cloak on and heading to the door.



After a few words, they parted, Ron and Hermione going back to the castle, Hagrid back into his hut.

Once back in the castle, Hermione turned to look at Ron. "I know the book where we'll find what we need, but it's in the Restricted Section."

"It's a shame Lockhart isn't here anymore...the man might have been a first-class idiot, but at least we could easily take a book from the Restricted Section. He was signing every bit of paper he could find."

"Ron..."

"What?"

"Never mind... do you have Harry's Invisibility cloak?"

"No, The Headmasters kept all his belongings."

"So we need a teacher's permission."

"Who could be stupid enough to sign us a slip allowing us to take a restricted book without asking questions?"

"Let me handle this, I'll have it by the end of the week."

"Really?"

"Since when did I lie to you? Trust me!"

"Alright, don't get so worked up!"

"Come on! It's nearly curfew, we have to go back to the tower."

The two youths ran back to their tower, slipping past the Fat Lady's portrait after giving the password "Phoenix's rise." They were the first ones to go up to their dorms that night.

Somewhere in the world, Snape was standing in a dark room, his face hidden under his hood, his eyes studying the man before him. He was tall, pale, but his face was becoming more and more human.



Voldemort was becoming again the charismatic man Snape had encountered years before.

During his first rise, the Dark Lord had been a great leader who could give his men strength just by speaking. He had a gift for making speeches. Snape had believed him at the beginning; he had fallen under his charm, having thought to act in the wizarding world's interest, for the rise of a better society, a society that would suppress all social evils.

Snape had to give it to the man; he had a way with words, an aura, and a charisma that had attracted many of the wizards deceived or disappointed by the Ministry. His power, the ease at which he cast even the hardest spells was fascinating too. Snape had believed in him, until one event opened his eyes.

*Flashback:*

Snape never took part in Voldemort's raids against those who were blinded by the Ministry's lies and refused to acknowledge the truth. He was a Potions Master, one of the best in his area.

One night, he was called to his master; he immediately apparated to him, bowing before him.

"Severus."

"My Lord."

"I called you tonight to be one of us in our little raid. I know of your skills, and I'm perfectly aware that you prefer the beauty of your potions to the intricacies of a wand, but I think that it will be an useful experience for you.

"The occasion to see the beauty of the way a spell breaks through someone, making him loose his mind, his senses, making him fall under your power; and with what? A few words and your wand. It can be compared to the way your potions act. And I want you to learn this."

"Thank you my Lord."



"Get ready, young Severus. We'll leave in half an hour."

It had been a nightmare. Along with ten other Death Eaters, they had apparated to a small house in the countryside. It was nearly Christmas time, and Snape could hear the family in the house.

"Raise your hood." Voldemort ordered.

They obeyed and waited for their master's sign.

At the moment he raised his arm, they stormed in the house, surprising its inhabitants. Snape recognized them: it was a well-known, old and respected family, the Lawrences, who had always played a big role in the Ministry. The whole family was there, from the grand-parents to the grand-children, the youngest being a few months old.

That night, Snape saw the horror of Voldemort for the first time: he witnessed the death of all the family, a girl only a couple of years old being tortured for the amusement of a few men... he heard them laughing as a woman writhed on the floor. He watched them commit atrocities. That night, Snape killed a man, at the order of Voldemort. Something he would never forgive himself for.

When it was finished, they left quickly. As they stepped out, Voldemort turned to him.

"As it's your first time, Severus, You'll have the honor of conjuring the Mark."

With his arm shaking slightly, Snape raised his wand and uttered the word, "Morsmordre."

A jet of black light shot up in the air.

Laughing merrily, Voldemort turned to his men, "You did well tonight. I think this will teach the Mudbloods, the Mudblood lovers and Dumbledore's followers what is awaiting them. Apparate back to your homes, I'll call you soon again."



Snape apparated back to his house with a pop and threw up the moment he arrived.

### *End of the Flashback*

Since that day he hadn't been able to look at Voldemort in the same way; each time he tried, he saw the face of the little girl, screaming in agony. As time passed, the memories faded, but he never felt again the admiration he had had for the Dark Lord.

Slowly he started to question Voldemort's ideas, though of course never openly. Little by little, he distanced himself from the Lord. He always answered to his calls and obeyed him, but he was doubtful.

Then, one day, he found himself in his old Headmaster's office.

### *Flashback*

Albus Dumbledore was looking at him with his piercing and twinkling blue eyes. Snape eyed the old man. He was the only wizard the Dark Lord still feared and Snape knew that Voldemort's main purpose was to destroy Hogwarts.

Its current headmaster was particularly bothersome to him. Already admired and revered for his defeat of Grindelwald, Albus Dumbledore had not lost his importance and had made the school his territory.

Voldemort could also see the use of having free reign over Hogwarts. The school molded the future generation of wizards and he would need it to raise the youths to respect his very name and yearn to serve him. Once he gained control of Hogwarts, he could use the children as a guaranty of their parents' behaviour and teach them to be his servants; with Dumbledore defeated, the aged wizard would lose support and more wizards would rally to him... Nothing would stop him.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Snape?"

"I need your help, Headmaster."



"Call me Albus, Mr. Snape, I'm no longer your headmaster. What sort of help do you need?"

Snape uncovered his left forearm, revealing his mark.

"I wish to help your side," he said, looking at the old man before him.

The blue eyes were piercing him, as though evaluating him. "Mr. Snape, showing me this Mark isn't really proof of your desire to help our side."

"I made a mistake, I want to try to make amends."

"Really? Excuse me, Mr. Snape, but what caused this change? It is very unusual to see a member of Voldemort's army changing sides."

"I've seen what he's doing; I was at the Lawrences' residence the night they were killed."

Snape's face was expressionless and his eyes were fixed on something only he could see. "It's not something I can forget, Headmaster."

"Well, Mr. Snape, before I make my decision, I hope you'll understand that I need to question you under Veritaserum."

Snape nodded and took the cup the man handed him, drinking it in one gulp.

For the following hour, Albus Dumbledore asked him several questions, on his loyalties, his motivations and his past.

Finally the truth serum wore off and Snape found himself once more in control of himself. He couldn't bear to look up into the eyes of the Head Master. Dumbledore had made him confess everything, and he had been guilty of murder, there was no denying it.

"Very well, Mr Snape. I'll gladly accept your help."

Snape looked up surprised as the old man continued to speak.



"But I can't remove your Mark. You'll still be forced to answer the call of Voldemort."

"I know."

"So, how do you want to help?"

"I was thinking of spying," he answered quickly. He had given it some thought and it was his only way out...

This statement earned him a sharp look.

"Are you sure, Mr. Snape? Spying is wrought with quite a lot of dangers, and Voldemort's punishment, if he were to discover your secrete, would be great..."

"I'm aware of the consequences of this decision. Professor Dumbledore, you don't have a spy, and either way I'm in danger. If I side with you, Voldemort will kill me, if I continue to serve The Dark Lord, I will face horrors beyond imagination, either way I find myself in a difficult position; so I might as well make the most of it."

"It's your decision."

"Then, I wish to spy, but if you could find a way to prevent him from calling me to participate to his raids..."

The professor seemed to be lost in thought for a moment before he said, "We need a Potions teacher. You can take the position if you want; it will give you some protection and an excuse not to be part of future raids."

"Professor Dumbledore, you know that if I accept, he will ask me to spy on you."

"Then, you'll have to spy for him," replied the Headmaster, his eyes twinkling, we shall just have to be very careful about what we tell him."

Snape nodded slowly.



"Very well, in that case, I agree."

"Good, I'll show you your quarters and have Minerva explain to you how the school works. Term will start September the first, but you're required to be here at least a week before."

Snape nodded slowly and got up.

"Professor, you are aware of what I am, of what I did? How can you let me teach children? How can you even think of it?"

Dumbledore sent him a piercing look.

"I know very well what you did. I heard it a few minutes ago. I knew the Lawrences quite well; they were good people who did not deserve such a fate. Do not think you won't be monitored at first, but everyone deserves a second chance and the possibility of redemption. Do not make me regret this, Severus."

The younger man nodded, understanding why Albus Dumbledore was hailed as one of the most powerful wizards of this time. The air had seemed to get colder and the room darker as the headmaster spoke. Power was nearly palpable around him. Suddenly those feelings vanished so swiftly Snape nearly thought he had dreamt them.

"Very well, now, since we're colleagues, you should call me Albus, Severus."

"Alright, Profe... Albus."

For the first time in days, Snape smiled a true smile, as he headed to the dungeons.

*End of the Flashback.*

But now, he was looking at him, barely able to hide his disgust for the almost-man. He was still tall, but his paleness was giving him a non-human aura. Add to this his blood-red eyes, and you had it. But as he regained power, his snake-like face had shaped back to one of



almost human features, if you made exceptions for the skin and the eyes.

Snape didn't know how this had been possible. He knew that the man was responsible for the theft of those artifacts, but didn't know anything about their use. The Dark Lord was remaining very secretive about it.

Only two men knew about it: two specialists of the artifacts who were well-versed in Dark rituals. They had come several times to his lab there to ask him for several ingredients. He had noted what they had asked for, but couldn't see what they were going to use them for. Some of them were highly incompatible.

All he knew was that it wasn't good news. The dark Lord had grown more and more content in the past few days. His appearance was changing back to what it was before, though with a few changes.

But the power of his voice had not changed. He could see some of the trainees who were going to be initiated tonight standing in a corner, hanging on his words, awed by this man. They didn't know anything about the reality of what they had just done.

The initiation went smoothly, and then the Dark Lord started to give his men orders and tasks.

"The wait is over! From today, the world will learn that The Dark Lord is back. They'll learn to fear me, and will kneel before me. The Basilisk will rise, and we'll purify our society, making it the society it should have been; a place where your children will grow correctly, not perverted by Mudbloods. Tonight we will strike, showing this corrupted world, that our reign is starting!"

Cheers answered his speech.

Snape had no choice but to clap. He was trying to find a way to warn Albus. An attack tonight? But where?

"Tonight, my Death Eaters, London will learn of our return."



More cheers were heard. The Dark Lord raised an arm and silence immediately fell on the room.

"Lucius, take your unit with you to Azkaban and bring the Dementors with you. The deal you'll offer them won't be something they will be able to refuse. Make sure that the prisoners are freed and that those who can recover their senses are cured. Join us in London at point C at midnight.

Nott, Avery, Fenrson, gather your men. Be ready in an hour. Trainees, new members, go to Isam."

As the Death Eaters parted, Snape followed the crowd, trying to exit as discreetly as possible to warn Albus.

"Severus!"

He stopped dead in his tracks and turned around.

"Yes, My Lord?"

"You will come with me. Bring some of your potions. We might have to conduct some interrogating, and your skills will be needed."

"Yes, My Lord."

"Take young Deran with you, he'll help you with your vials."

Snape bowed before leaving, understanding Voldemort's real motives: the man didn't trust him and wouldn't leave him alone.

For the following hours, He gathered his vials, placing Unbreakable charms on them. He had to brew some potions he knew the Dark Lord fancied too. The young Death Eater was following him silently.

Finally, it was nearly midnight, and holding a few bags, he headed to Voldemort's room.

He entered and approached the Dark Lord. Bowing before him, he waited for the man's word.

"Thank you Severus, Be ready to leave in a few minutes."



Ten minutes later, The Death Eaters left for London, following their master and the London Massacre started.

Albus Dumbledore warily eyed the chair of the Potions Master. Severus hadn't come back from his meeting last night. He was worried about what could have happen to the man.

Suddenly Poppy came in, running. She approached him.

"Albus, Severus came back a few minutes ago, he's not gravely injured, but something is very wrong with him."

"I'm coming, Poppy."

He stood and as he was about to walk out of the hall, the Owl post arrived and dropped The Daily Prophet in his hand. The Headline answered his concerns about Severus.

**THE LONDON MASSACRE. YOU-KNOW-WHO IS BACK!**

*"Last night, the town of London was ruined. At midnight, You-know-who, followed by hundreds of Death Eaters, stormed into the town, destroying everything in their way, causing the deaths of thousands of Muggles. The exact number is still unknown. They erupted in Diagon Alley, surprising everyone. Nobody had time to react. A few people managed to escape by Floo or by apparating, but soon, it was impossible as the Dark Lord set up anti-Apparition wards. From that moment on nobody escaped him. Bodies were found heavily mutilated this morning.*

*The whole street of Diagon Alley is a pile of rubble now. Only Gringotts is still standing, thanks to the goblin-magic. From the early estimations, 596 people were killed, but bodies are still being found as we print. The Muggle town is in ruins, two thirds of the buildings were destroyed, and the city is now paralyzed.*

*It was said that Dementors were present at the Dark Lord's attack, and we learned this morning that they indeed left Azkaban with some of the Dark Lord's men after freeing all the prisoners. Many wizards received the Kiss last night and were put in St Mungo's charge. The hospitals are loaded and people are panicking all over the world.*



*Muggle governments are in disarray, thinking it is a terrorist attack. They're ready to retaliate on the countries they think responsible of this attack.*

*The Minister, who managed to escape in the first minutes of the attack, has refused to give us any explanation. He has denied for months the return of the Dark Lord, against Albus Dumbledore's advice. Even the disappearance of the Boy Who Lived was dismissed by him as a hoax. Mr Fudge was stripped of his functions as word of the attack spread in the country. Is Mr Potter still alive? Hogwarts' Headmaster believes so, as he told us in the last interview we had with him. In this case, where is he?..."*

The article continued for four pages, with testimony of witnesses, interviews of foreign Ministers, and worse: photos of destroyed buildings, bodies.

Albus Dumbledore stood still in the Hall, before dropping the Newspaper. As he stood, a wave of owls arrived, most of them carrying black letters. Before the students receiving them opened them, he spoke up. "As you might have learned, London was destroyed and many were killed.

Let me assure you that you're protected here and that as long as I am here, I'll make certain that this school remains unharmed by Voldemort. I give those of you that have lost someone all my support. The staff and myself will always be ready to talk if you need to."

With that, he exited the hall, nearly running to the Hospital wing in his haste to talk with Severus.

In the Hall, the professors didn't know what to do. Several students were crying, some were in hysterics; and many were surrounded by their friends who were trying to calm them. Chaos was spreading in the Hall.

Only the Slytherins remained quite calm. The professors looked at each other, sensing the fear of their students.

But it was only the beginning...



Thanks again to all of you for the reviews and comments.

tima : Thanks for the review !

Elea :Je l'ai déjà dit mais ma pauvre tu es complètement folle (je suis pas mieux tu vas dire... ce qui n'est pas faux...) ET je te dirais que A a été postée, donc t'as rien à dire. Et toi où en est ta talie..... Allez à bientôt !

shdurrani : Thanks for reviewing. To answer your question, the time frame is the same at Hogwarts and at the Headquarters.



## **Chapter Nine**

Harry groaned as he came back to consciousness. That had hurt. He sat on the grass, still a bit dizzy, trying to remember what happened. He had just finished his training. He remembered having skipped his classes and trained the whole day. He had headed back to the Headquarters. Then nothing.

He furrowed his brows, trying to find what had happened.

Pain!

He had been in excruciating pain. His scar had been hurting like crazy. He had blacked out a few minutes after that.

Visions of what happened the previous night flashed in his mind. Death Eaters, followed by Dementors irrupting in London, Diagon Alley, killing, blasting everything or everyone they saw., People running, screaming, panic printed on their faces; despair, fear. Fire, screams, cries, blood.... Some tried to escape, only to be killed.

Harry closed his eyes, a lonely tear falling on his cheek. So many deaths, so much pain..... He pushed the visions away, deep in his mind locking them up, with his other personal nightmares.

Doing this isn't going to solve your problem, you know.

Harry rolled his eyes.

Great, you're a counselor too!

Don't laugh at that! I'm serious!

For once!

Harry...

It's none of your business what I do with my thoughts.

It is when you're doing something which could endanger your health or your sanity.



I don't want to talk about it.

Alright, but what are you doing when this will happen again? Clearly this guy isn't going to stop and you're going to watch everything. What'll you do when it'll become too much to bear?

I don't know.... But what I know is that YOU should keep your nose out of MY business!

You need to talk about it to someone!

It's my choice, so stay out of it!

Alright

# What time is it?

Well, it's time for our little session, if you want to know.

Couldn't you let me go of this one?

Maybe I would if your soon-to-be partner hadn't been here.

Don't tell me you're still on it! I already told you that... What!

He's standing behind you.

In a few seconds, Harry was on his feet, facing a confused Teneb, leaning on his horse.

Of all the moment possible to see him, he had to find me today !

"Are you alright?" he heard the elf ask him.

[illegible]

Teneb had woken early, like he always did since he had found about the human nearly two weeks ago. He quickly dressed and went to the stables. In a times and times practiced pattern he readied his horse, petting it lovingly before mounting him and heading for the hill. His stallion had been a gift of his friend, Prince Celen. He had called him



Myst, because of its gray coat and deep black mane, tail and stockings on each legs. The horse also had a small white star shaped mark on its forehead. He was of the same breed than Shadow, and looked a bit like the great black stallion, he was only a bit shorter and more slender.

He directed his mount where he knew he would meet the human. He was half-way, when Mystic stopped abruptly.

Startled, he looked around him to see what had made his horse stop like this.

He frowned, there was nothing strange.... Then he looked down.

His eyes widened in surprise.

Harry was sitting in the grass, looking completely dizzy. His attention was caught by his forehead. He could see dry blood around his scar. He saw him frown, wince and tense. Then he opened his eyes and looked at him.

"Are you alright?" he asked, knowing the moment the words left his lips that it was a stupid question...

[illegible]

Harry sighed.

He was probably doing that on purpose.

"Do I look alright?"

"Not really.... Why have you dry blood on your forehead?"

"What?!"

"Why have you...?"

"I understood that part, thank you!"



He raised his head and touched his scar lightly, wincing a bit when his hand came in contact with it.

Great! And Teneb had to show up at this precise moment.

"Care to explain?" asked the young elf, dismounting his stallion.

"Not really, it has nothing to do with you...", replied Harry, "Just with my past," he added in a whisper.

Apparently the elf heard him, as he raised his eyebrows, but for once, and Harry was grateful for that, he didn't press him to explain.

Harry stood up and looked around. He put a hand in one of his trousers' pockets and pulled out a small whistle, carved in wood.

"Be ready to go," he said to Teneb.

Seconds later two sharp whistles could be heard, and minutes later Shadow arrived. He didn't stop and Harry jumped on his back as he passed near him.

They galloped towards the hill, Teneb on their tail, as it had taken the young elf a few seconds to register what had just happened.

[illegible]

They arrived at their usual spot a few minutes later. Once there, they silently climbed out of their horses and Teneb took off his stallion's equipment.

Before he could try to contact his guardian, Harry spoke up.

"My guardian wants me to talk to you about something. In fact, I think he already talk with your guardian about it."

Teneb look at him a bit surprised, generally, Harry barely acknowledged him, much less spoke to him.

"Yes, and...?"



"To sum up, he thinks that I should practice against a real opponent, meaning you."

This time, Teneb was shocked, but immediately, he started to weight the pros and the cons.

"You're not obliged to accept." Added Harry.

Teneb was still thinking, training with Harry could only help him to improve ; he had to admit that the human was great and could teach him a lot. Moreover a few well chosen words from his guardian achieve to convince him.  
"Alright."

Harry looked up at him, a bit surprised by his quick agreement.

"You sure?"

"When do we begin?"

Harry smirked, *alright, if he wants to have it this way.....*

"Now." He summoned his sword and other weapons, making them appear near him. Picking up his sword, he raised, before bowing, imitated by Teneb.

They faced each-other for a few minutes then Teneb lunged at Harry who parried his blow easily, retaliating immediately.

After half an hour, during which Teneb found himself more often on his back than standing.

Out of the blue, Harry stopped and sheathed his sword.

"Alright, this isn't going anyway."

"What's the problem?"

"Just an advice, if you have to fight one day, don't use your sword, you'd be killed in a few minutes..."



"Why?" asked Teneb a bit curtly. He was proud of his fighting skills and was often praised about them.

"Well, you know how to fight, the stance, the tricks, the ways, but you have a little default that could mean your death in a fight... You're too readable, too predictable. I know your move at least five seconds before you do it."

"How is this possible?" Teneb was stunned by this. His teachers never said anything about that...

"Easy, before attacking, you fix the spot where you'll put your attack. If you're going to attack on your right, you put all your weight on your left side, just before delivering your blow and the opposite if you attack on the left. You furrow your eyebrows before attacking too. Moreover you're doing unnecessary moves, like jumps, turns... You only tire yourself."

"And you're an expert?" said sarcastically Teneb.

"It's only an advice, but that's what my guardian taught me: always keep your opponent in the doubt. And when you fight, you seem to plaster your intentions on your body. But you can do whatever you want..."

At this, Teneb was torn between two feelings: one being pride, he didn't like the tone Harry took while talking to him; the second being his thirst for improvement, his desire to best his abilities.

He sighed.

"Alright! But what could I do, I was taught to fight that way!"

"Well, if I want someone to practice with, we'll definitely have to correct this default of yours...."

"I understood that, but what about the other forms of combat?"

Harry smirked at him.

"We're going to find out how much you have to learn..."



An hour and a half later, Teneb fell on the floor, completely worn out.

"I'm dead..."

"Why are you still talking then?"

Teneb glared at Harry

"That was an image."

"Really?"

Teneb only glared more.

"You're loving it?"

"What?"

"Annoying me."

"Me? How could you think me capable of doing such a thing?" replied Harry, batting his eyelashes, faking innocence, his voice filled with sarcasm. "Besides doing it is so easy that it would be a crime to miss the opportunity," he added.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome. Well I'm done with you for today, I've seen on what you have to work so that I've someone with whom I'll be able to practice."

Teneb looked up at him.

"What about archery?"

"I think you should rest, classes start in an hour." Said Harry.

Teneb raised an eyebrow.

"Why do I have the feeling that you're eluding my question?"

Harry looked coldly at him.



"Think whatever you want."

With that, he approached Shadow and jumped on the stallion, speeding towards the headquarters.

Teneb watched him galloping away, making an assessment of today's session.

Pros: Now he'd trained with the human, something which could only make him improve, since the human was, even if it disturbed him to say it, better than most of his teachers.

Cons: He still hadn't any answer to his questions: Why was his scar bleeding? How did he get this scar? How could he be that powerful? How did he get his necklace? How did he managed to find his guardian without anybody's help? What form did his guardian have? What was this necklace he was always wearing?.... And now, why didn't he want to practice on archery?

He shook his head before mounting Myst.

He hurried to prepared for his first class. After Harry's outburst in Effilin's class and his absence from all his lessons the day before it was promising to be interesting.... Unknown to him, Harry was thinking exactly the same thing.

[illegible]

He wasn't disappointed.

Harry sighed mentally.

*Now I'm sure they're making a contest: one point per insult, reprimands, snide comments, five points per punishment or any sanction possible...*

Effilin's class had been more horrible than usual, and that was something. Apparently the elf hadn't appreciated in the slightest to see Harry openly disobeying to him.



After having him running around the room for half the class, seeing it wasn't tiring him, he used him as his 'assistant', meaning his punching-ball and lackey for the rest of the class.

To his disappointment, Harry hadn't complained or showed any pain at this treatment, and he couldn't really do worse than that...

Edevia's lessons....

There had been a reason behind Harry's refusal of practicing archery with Teneb. He knew that the elf was way better than him. Archery was one of his weakest point. He wasn't really bad, just average.

Sword-fighting came naturally to him, when he was holding his sword, he was in tune with it, seeing it as an expansion of his arm. Hand-to-hand combat was easy for him too, as he had set up his own style, adapted to his skills: agility, speed; and he wasn't quite bad with knives.

He hadn't had a lot of problems with magic. The copying he did in Nerthor's and Sarwin's class finally found a use. Dueling was his strong point. He could do it with or without his wand as he continued to practice with it, knowing his wandless abilities would have to remain secret when he'll come back to Hogwarts. He was good at manipulating his element too. Mind magic had been difficult for him to learn, but with training he had reached a good level. He had very strong mental defenses, could read minds or dreams if he entered a trance, had a fairly good empathy and telepathy and if need arise could do some telekinesis. But the last one was particularly draining. Healing magic wasn't his forte, he could heal minors wounds like bruises, mild cuts, dislocated members, simple fractures, but any serious injuries was beyond his ability. His animagus training was progressing quite well, even if he still didn't know his form..

But archery... He could use a bow if necessary, but in a battle he would avoid it at all costs. It felt weird to use this weapon, and he would never hit near the center. For him, archery would always be a bothering necessity.

He had to admit that the bow he got from the dwarfs made it easier for him.



Anyway if he wanted to hit a far away target, he would throw a fireball, some flames, his aim would be more accurate...

So, in Edevia's lesson, he didn't have to fake his uneasiness. And this time, she had decided to put him through Hell.

Once the lesson was over, he dragged himself to the common room for his lunch.

But apparently the teachers had had other plans for him.

As he seated himself, he saw his favorite teachers heading towards him.

Great, the whole Harry-torture group!

Effilin, Edevia, Sarwin, Nerthor and Lienhior approached him, with a satisfied gleam in their eyes.

Uh oh, trouble's coming...

I wonder what they come up with.

What are you doing here? Enjoy the show?

No, just curiosity.

Great, in front crazy and human haters, in my head crazy and lunatic guardian. I'm doomed!

Took you long enough to notice this.

"Human, we met to deal with your behavior yesterday and came up with a right punishment." Said Sarwin.

Effilin threw him a piece of garment.

"You're expected in the kitchen. Now." he barked.

Nerthor smirked.



"You'll work there for three days, and Istyan has been warned about you."

Harry was staring at the masters in shock.

I don't know if it's bad or good news.

Knowing them, I would say bad.

Yes, but at least I'm lesson-free for three days.

But as Harry found out, it was a mere compensation against what he was told to do.

As he went to the hill this evening, he was fuming. Once he was there, he dismounted Shadow, and started pacing.

A servant! They made me a servant!!

Breath Harry, breath. In, out, in, out...

I WON'T calm down. These... These stupid brainless idiots made a slave for three days!

Then, training will calm you, now run!

I...

RUN!

Harry complied without arguing for once.

He trained longer than usual, and this time, Teneb didn't join him, something he was grateful for, as he would have probably fried the first elf he saw on the spot. Once he was done, he sat on the ground, panting, feeling drained, but now calmer. He knew Teneb would improve quickly. He couldn't deny that he was skilled, so he'd have to take him to Terio, he will need to find his weapons. He had argued other this with Arxeren, who had been the one to mention it, but in the end, he had lost.

He took his necklace in his hand, closing his hand on it.



As always it had a calming effect on him.

*I'm not alone*

This thought contributed to finish to appease him.

He called Shadow and petted the stallion. He had come to the point where he considered the fierce animal as a friend.

He mounted the horse and headed for the headquarters.

Before slipping in his bed, he left a note for Teneb, then fell in a welcomed sleep.

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Teneb stared at the ceiling. He had waited for Harry to come back, deciding against joining him for training. He had seen him at the end of classes and he looked murderous. Teneb had judged that it would be safer for him not to approach him until he cooled off, as Elf, Magis or Elementals must not have been on the friend list of the human, not that he had them already in great esteem to begin with.

He was quite confused by his teachers' behavior: once Garth had skipped a whole day, and they hadn't said anything after, even to ask for explanations... Why did they act this way towards the human?

He heard someone dropped something on his bedside and made a mental note to look at it first thing in the morning.

When he woke up, he saw a small note and quickly snatched it. He produced a small light, as everyone was still asleep...

*There won't be morning session for the following three days. You can come, in the evening, around 9 PM, same place.*

Teneb looked a bit confused at the message, then shrugged, why not?



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The next day was a day of pure torture for Harry. Everyone there took advantage of the situation, and once it was nearly over, Harry was on the edge of explosion. Between, the ridiculous outfit he had been forced to wear, the taunts and being ordered around for the day, he had reached his limits. Garth's group had particularly been happy with this situation.

He sat down on the far end of the Daryns' table and started to ate his meal, which was nearly cold, as he had to served everyone before being able to eat.

Demenor hadn't even looked at him once during the meal. Some mentor he was!

*He has completely forgotten about me*

Harry was quite saddened by this thought. He missed having someone to talk to. Dumbledore had assumed this role, and against everything, he had always hoped that the leader would remember him and help him one day...

The teachers must have told him some story because he didn't question Harry's clothes or behavior. Finally, once dinner was over, he stood up and clapped his hands a few times, to attract attention.

"Daryns? May I have your attention please?"

Silence fell on the room.

"You have been here for nearly ten months. So at the end of this week, the presentation will take place. Listen carefully to what your teachers will say, as they will prepare you for this ceremony."

Arxeren?

I'll explain tonight, oh and we'll try to access the Soul plan too.

Really?



Yes

There was a small silence, then:

Thank you, for everything.

Arxeren didn't answer, there was nothing to say...

[illegible]

"Dodge! Parry, lunge!"

# Clang!

"Your feet!"

# Clang!

"You're too open!"

Clang, clang, Skkkrrrrriech.

"Your eyes, stop looking at your aim! Stop exposing your arm."

Clang... BAM!

"Don't let yourself be distracted by your opponent." Said Harry, summoning the elf's sword to him and handing it to him.

Teneb was panting, his hands on his knee, trying to catch his breath.

"I'm going to teach you a basic sequence, like the one I'm practicing, only more simple. Look."

He executed a series of moves.

"Got it? Follow me, sword up, slash, parry, push, drop, sweep....."

For a few minutes, he explained the sequence then watch Teneb execute it, correcting him with curt words, then making him accelerate.



"Alright, I'm going to attack, and you'll retaliate with this series, understand?"

"Ok," said the elf, a bit forcefully as he had trouble catching his breath.

"Good, in position, ready, go." He lunged at Teneb who replied by the movements he had just learned.

"Well done." Admitted Harry once it was done. "Enough for tonight, I'm going to present you to someone."

Teneb looked at him quizzically.

"Who?"

"Terio."

"And who is Terio?"

"A dwarf."

"A dwarf!"

"We have a winner!"

"But,... there hasn't been a dwarf here for decades!"

"And? Where do you think I got my weapons?"

"Well.... Alright! But why are we going to see him?"

"For your weapons."

"What's wrong with them?"

"Terio will tell you what's wrong better than me." Harry replied sharply.

Teneb kept silent. He knew that when Harry used this tone, it was useless to try to get a straight answer.



They walked for ten minutes. Then Harry stopped and kneeled. He put a hand on the grass and muttered a few words Terio had taught him before leaving.

The entrance to the dwarves' caves opened before Teneb's unbelieving eyes.

Harry stepped in and motioned for Teneb to follow.

They walked in silence to a gigantic cave. Once there, Harry look around and stopped a dwarf passing by.

"Sorry, but where could I find Terio?"

The dwarf looked closely at him.

"I'll go and fetch him. Wait here."

Harry thanked him and went back to Teneb.

A few minutes later, the dwarf came back with Terio.

"Harry! It's good to see you again."

"You too Terio."

They chatted for awhile.

Harry had come back a few times to see the dwarf and have him check over his weapons.

"Why are you here anyway?"

"Well, I'm training with him there," he pointed to Teneb who was looking around him, a bit lost.

"An elf?" said Terio, a bit harshly.

"Yes, but he can be tolerable. Anyway, I don't have a lot of choice in this matter, my trainer order me to find a partner to work with, and he's the only one who found out about me..."



"He can be trusted?"

"I don't know. I'm not that fond of elves, but he's ok I think."

"Does he have a background in weapon crafting? Or is he as clueless as you were when I first saw you?"

"Hey! I wasn't that bad! And I'm taking great care of mine"

"That's right, you've been a good student."

"Thank you, but to answer you're question, I don't know."

"Alright, Leave him here, I'm going to see how much he knows, then I'll take the matter in my hands."

"Thanks a lot, I'll come back in three hours."

"See you then."

They approached Teneb.

"Teneb, this is Terio, he's going to show you around."

Terio started immediately to question the young elf.

Harry used this moment to disappear and went outside.

Alright, now, that your little companion isn't here, I'll explain about the presentation, then we'll try to reach the plan.

Sounds good.

Well, the presentation takes place ten months after the beginning of the training and two months before the binding. During this ceremony, the Daryns are presented to the dragons, explained the duties of a rider... It's mostly to allowed the dragons to have a look at the future riders. There is a special outfit for it, I'll show you, as I'm not sure that your beloved teachers will give it to you.

Probably not. Is there a special pattern for the ceremony?



Yes, listen...

For half an hour, he explained how the ceremony took place.

Alright, I think I've got it.

Goo, now what about our second task... You're ready?

As ready as I'll ever be.

In that case, go ahead

Harry let himself fall in an heavy trance after sitting in the grass.

He reached the first plan and saw Arxeren.

When he was talking mentally, he wasn't entering the plan, just using the link he shared with his guardian. Once you had found your guardian, you didn't have to go to the spirit plan to talk to him, except if you wanted to see him...

Good, you're getting better at it.

"Thank you"

It had always surprised Harry to be able to speak normally in the plan and not mentally.

Now, concentrate, and do as we practiced. I'll be with you.

Harry focused on himself and on the structure of the plan.

To pass to the second plan, he had to pierce the structure of the first one.

*Energy, only energy matters.*

Chanting this like a mantra, he focused harder.

Little by little the familiar surroundings of the plan started to fade and dissolve into lightness. Harry had soon learned that he could controlled what the plan looked like, well, as soon as he was



concentrated. He had finally settled for a nice glade. But soon, there was nothing but light. He concentrated all his will on the light and soon could make out the flows of energy in it.

Now the tricky part was coming. He had to tune himself to this energy. He approached one of the flows and slowly approached his hand. He felt a mild shock when his palm entered in contact with this pure energy. Slowly, he started to channel his own energy and power out. He saw a gold thread exit his hand and join the flow. But he didn't break the connection. He focused on it and willed it to open to the plan's energy. Slowly, the golden color faded a little, while the silver-white taint of the flows, took a few golden sparks. Finally he knew it, he could feel the energy humming under his hand. He channeled in his power and removed his hand. Slowly, he dropped his concentration and the plan got back in its usual form.

Arxeren was still there, but this time he was smiling.

Good Harry, Well done, but it took you long!

Harry ignore him and smiled.

Ready?

Yes

Then, climb on me, if you've done your job right, we'll be able to pass...

Aren't you a spirit?

In this plan we have forms, and I have to point out that you are also a spirit here!

He didn't have to repeat this twice. Harry immediately jumped on him, even if he was still quite intimidated by having to mount the mighty animal...

Then the dragon took flight to the Soul plan.



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Once again, thank you all for reviewing.

I'll put individual thank you notes later on, because right now, I don't really have the time, and I think that you'll prefer to have the chapter first....

I have change jexos into Daryn. Somebody pointed to me that the former term, jexos, was close to the word "jerk" so I change it.

I'm going to fix it in the other chapters as soon as I can, because, right now, I'm supposed to study for my philosophy test for tomorrow...

Well, I hope you'll enjoy this chapter!

Naia

Dark-Angel666, Angel of Light, Golden Eagle, Tasidia, CassieOwls, TheUnknown, crab, Blizzard, Copper Fire, Phoenix353, zaksgirllol, Rach, BlackDragon, GryfGal, Phoenix of Light, Phoenix Flight, Pattenrond, Crydwyn, ? ? ?, neocat-HP-420, Diva-Elf, Rebecca Cecilie, lady sakura, Yedidiah, Soulless, ER, Lady FoxFire, Rachel A. Prongs, Otaku freak, Maab, Life, alana, Rishi, zeynel, some guy, blackunicorn, LUCY, Skysong, Magi Vixen, Lady Pheonix Gryffindor, unknown(even to me, chibi, BloodRedSword, starkitty, Fire-Mage



## **Chapter Ten**

Harry gripped the dragon's neck. He might have been only present in spirit form, but this seemed real enough for him.

I need to breath you know .

"Really ? I thought you were only a spirit ?"

Stop twisting my words, we're approaching the Gate. I hope you got your part right.

"I did, stop worrying!"

I'll be worried for myself if I stopped being worried as far as you're concerned!

Harry rolled his eyes.

Suddenly he sensed himself twirling before feeling himself falling into pieces. It wasn't painful just plainly strange.

Little by little he became whole again and looked around him.

He really didn't know how the place would look like. Somehow the common vision of Paradise as a lovely place of peace, with magnificent surroundings, a place of peace and abundance didn't seem right.

Do you like it?

Harry didn't answer, busy looking around him.

This was not what he had imagined.

The whole place seemed to be made of clouds which were changing shape, color... Light was drawing shinning roads under their feet.

I'll take that as a yes.

"This is.. I don't even know how to put it!"



Amazing? Magnificent? Incredible? Breath-taking? Or you could say...

"I get it, I get it! Thank you! Now what do we do?"

Well, I think that as it's your first time here, you'll be able to stay about an hour here.

Pause. "What do you mean by 'about an hour'?"

Didn't you know?

"Know what?"

Being in the Soul plane drain you. You have to maintain your link with the real plane with your energy. But you'll be able to come for longer later, with practice. There also a time difference: for each minutes you spend here, two pass in your plan.

"Ok, I think I got it. Now to come back to the problem at hand, what do we do?"

Well don't you want to see someone?

"I..."

/ARXEREN!/

Both Harry and his guardian turned and saw a man approaching.

The guardian groaned.

Not him again!

Harry raised his eyebrow.

"Why do I have the feeling that I don't want to know about this...."

/Arxeren, old pal! It's been ages!/  
said the man, slapping the dragon's neck. / Find yourself an other one to watch?/

Hello to you too Karzan the guardian replied courtly.



Not seeming to have heard the cold tone in the reply, the man kept on talking.

/ I must say, that this one gave you a better shape, though I liked the monkey too, in particular when you tried to prove me that you could imitate Tarzan and fell flat on the grounds.../

Harry muffled his laughter, knowing full-well that his guardian wouldn't like to see him laughing at him.

Arxeren turned to Harry.

Harry?

"Yes" Harry was desperately trying to cover his amusement.

I think there are people waiting for you over there, he pointed to something behind him with his head.

"You don't mind if I stay there?"

No, Karkan and I have to talk about a few things... He said, shooting a withering look at the man who didn't notice it.

Harry quickly left knowing that he wouldn't be able to restrain himself more longer.

He walked away but stopped dead in his tracks when he saw the people waiting for him.

His parents....

~~~~~

Harry starred at them, completely stunned. Sure he had been waiting for that moment for so long, but now that he was here he didn't know what to do. Part of him wanted to run to them and hug them for dear life, and other wanted to break down. There was a strained silence.

"Mum? Dad?"

His parents' faces broke in a relieved but somewhat sad smile.



"Harry..."

That was it. Harry cracked. He felt silent tears running down his cheeks and looked down.

Suddenly he felt a pair of arms hugging him, and a hand running in his hair. He heard the soft, soothing voice of his mother murmuring comforting words to him.

He leaned on her and buried his head in her shoulder.

He cried.

Something he hadn't done in months since he arrived here, but that now seemed natural. Everything he had bottled up for those times escaped.

Once he calmed down, he didn't move. He was now being hugged by his father too and it felt right.

"We're sorry Harry..."

This surprised him, why should they be sorry?

He pulled away, looking closely at his parents.

"What?!"

"We're sorry." Repeated his mother.

"For what? You've nothing to apologize for."

Lily shook her head.

"For leaving you, for the life you had to lived, for not being here when you needed us..."

Harry                      starred                      at                      them.  
"It's not your fault...."

"Then stop blaming yourself for my death." A new voice cut in.



Harry whirled and came face to face with Cedric.

He was as he remembered him.

"C-Cedric?" stuttered Harry.

"Harry, I didn't blame you once."

"But, it's my... I'm responsible!"

"Stop that! You didn't know! All you do was being fair and I can't blame you for that. Moreover you respected my wish and brought my body back, that's all I asked for..."

Harry was looking at the older boy as if he was completely nuts.

"By blaming yourself, you're playing You-Know Who's game. He wants you to feel guilty, he wants to crush you, to throw you over the edge."

"And he succeeded," Mumbled Harry.

"Partly, you weren't only motivated by what happened last year but also by your current... situation," replied Cedric.

"Whatever..."

Cedric approached him.

"Look at me. Promise me that you'll stop blaming yourself."

Harry looked closely at him.

"I'll try," was his only answer, but Cedric seemed satisfied.

"Thank you Harry. I'll leave you now, you must have things to talk about with your parents..."

Harry smiled weakly and watched him going away before turning to his parents.



He stood before them, feeling a bit awkward. Sensing his uneasiness, they walked to him, stopping in front of him.

His father smiled.

"So, following my steps in the Quidditch team?"

This broke the ice and soon they were talking. Harry was listening closely to their stories: How they met, their times at Hogwarts, little anecdotes on the teachers, or they classmates, such as the time when Sirius lost a bet and had to dress as a medieval lady for a day, or when Snape made one of his cauldron explode during a Potion lesson, covering the classroom with green goo, because he had mistaken two ingredients.

They were engrossed in one of Lily's tale of the first time her sister decided to put make-up, ending up looking like a clown that they didn't see Arxeren coming.

Harry? It's time to leave.

Harry bit his low lip and looked at both his parents.

Lily hugged her son.

"Remember that we'll always watch over you, we love you more than anything." Then with a last squeeze, she pulled away. His father took her place.

"We're so proud of you. You've turned to be a great person Harry, Never let anyone convince you otherwise or put you down."

Harry looked down. He could practically heard the words "like you have done so far" hanging in the air.

"Don't get me wrong Harry," added James, "I'm really proud of what you have done, but you shouldn't let people push you around..."

"I'll try dad."

James' smile lit his face.



"Thank you Harry."

Harry? We must go now.

His parents hugged him a last time, reminding him to come back soon and that they'll always be with him.

Harry and Arxeren came back to the First plane.

"Arxeren?"

Yes?

"Will I be able to access the Soul plane without you?"

Of course! You didn't think I'll always bring you! Now, you're keyed to the plane, all you have to do is summoned a Pagat. He will take you to the Second Plane.

"A what?"

A Pagat. They are messengers, and can bring people from the Spirit plane to the Soul one if the person is keyed. You just have to say "Semreh" and one of them will come.

Harry smiled.

"Thank you a lot."

You're welcome

"Now, who was this guy"

Karzan?

"Yes, he seemed to know you well..."

Unfortunately... We had to work on something together times ago and since then I can't get him off of my back.

"I'll talk with him, he seemed to know quite interesting stories about you."



Don't you dare!

Harry couldn't help laughing at the panic-stricken face of his guardian.

Before Arxeren could reply he left the plane and come back to the real world.

He stretched, his body a bit cramped from having remained two hours in the same position. Standing up he looked around. Well, tried to as it was now near pitch-black.

Flicking his hand he conjured a small fireball and headed back to the dwarves.

He entered their caves and went straight for the one where he left Teneb.

He sighed in relief seeing them talking quietly in a corner. He had to admit that he had been a bit afraid of what he might have found. Dwarves didn't really appreciate elves, finding them snobby and too full of themselves. Add to that the fact that elves refused to help the dwarves during their war against the trolls hundreds year before, arguing that they wished to remain neutral and that they weren't warriors, something even the stupidest dwarf wouldn't have believed, as elves were taught archery and sword fight very young. The dwarves managed to win, but the conflict ended with a bloodshed on both sides. They had had a huge city caved in a mountain with about 80 000 inhabitants. They all died as the mountain crashed on them. The troll had managed to steal a sort of explosive and provoked the fall of the mountain, killing all of the inhabitants.

The war ended a few weeks later, in a final showdown that left most of its protagonist dead on the grounds. The Trolls fled and the dwarves started rebuilding everything. From that day, the relations between Elves and Dwarves had always been very tensed. The dwarves never really forgave them to have refused to help them or at least gave them something to protect their cities, as they had asked.

"Harry" said Terio.

"Yes?"



"Brought him here tomorrow and the day after. He knows quite a lot but has still some things to learn. I'll give him his weapons in three days."

"Same time?"

"Yes"

"Thank you a lot Terio."

The dwarf smiled.

"You're welcome Harry. Come back when you wish."

"I will, don't worry."

They parted. Teneb hadn't said a word to Harry since he came back.

"Harry?"

The young wizard turned to the elf.

"What?"

"How long have you known him?"

"A few months."

"He doesn't seem to be like dwarves are said to be."

Harry narrowed his eyes.

"I think that it's time you get your own opinion on something instead of agreeing blindly to what people say. You'll have to make your own choices."

His tone was a bit harsh but he didn't care at that moment. "See you tomorrow night, same time, same place."

He turned and left Teneb at his own thoughts.



The elf looked at the human. Once again he didn't know what to think. What should he believe? What he was seeing or what he was taught?...

The two following days followed the same pattern. Harry was still punished, in the evening he brought Teneb to Terio then left and trained. He wasn't ready to go to the Soul plane again so he practiced on his animagus skills. He had nearly finished self transformations, which were the first steps to achieving animagus forms. He could now transformed huge part of his body into animals limbs in a heartbeat.

Harry?

The dark-haired teenager nearly jumped out of his skin as he had been focusing on a tricky transformation: the face.

Arxeren! I told you to stop doing that!

To fun to stop. But anyway, I think you're ready to go further in this part of your training.

Really?

Yes, what about finding your form?

What do I do? replied Harry, dying to try it out. Achieving his Animagi form was really important for him.

Well, you need some water, some Reania, two leaves of Ardailen and three drops of your blood.

The Ardailen is easy to find, I think I saw a bush of it not far away. There is some Reania in the kitchen. I could summon it. Water is easy to find, same goes for blood.

Then what are you waiting for?

Today, Teneb would be given his weapons, so Harry knew that he'd have more time to train.

Half an hour later, everything was ready. All he had to do was to add the blood.



Alright Harry. This isn't a commonly used method, but once you'll have put the blood in this, this will change to a silver color and it will show you your form or forms.

Forms?

Go ahead!

Harry shrugged and dropped his blood in the cup he had conjured.

Immediately the mixture turned a silver color but, Harry could see some gold sparks in it. Dismissing this, he look in the cup attentively. The swirls of the liquid suddenly stopped and the whole thing became crystal clear.

Slowly the shape of an animal appeared. Harry gasped. He was looking at a phoenix, then the picture faded to be replaced by a leopard, a raven and finally a Sowaroc. The last one drew a gasp from Harry.

Good, two magical creatures, very good....

Arxeren, how can I have more than one shape?

Simple, everyone has more than one, these are the forms you can become, but some fit you better than other. The second and following ones are difficult to achieve, in particular if the animals are enemies. The mind thought against it.

Alright, I think I got it.

Good. You'll need to practice a charm and a potion to achieve one of your forms.

The rest of the evening was spent on practicing the charm and starting the potion.

The next day, Harry went back to classes. He remained silent thorough the whole day, staying in he shadows.



The lessons had been suspended due to the presentation, which was to take place in three days, and they were being taught the ways of the ceremony.

Harry was bored to death. Arxeren had already explained this to him. He had even conjured his own outfit, seeing that nobody gave his to him.

This night, Teneb would receive his weapons and they'd start serious practice. In two months, it would be the binding ceremony. This lasted two days: the first one was a competition involving every students. They were expected to show everything they learned. Most of the second day was reserved to meditation, the binding was to take place in the end of the afternoon.

He brought Teneb once more to Terio but this time he waited for him. His potions now needed to simmer for two weeks before he could add the final ingredients.

An hour later, Teneb came back, smiling and holding his new weapons.

Terio looked at them both.

"Well, I expect you to take care of your weapons..."

Harry smiled at his dwarf friend.

"Of course."

"Good. Come back if you need anything," he looked at Teneb closely.

"This goes for you too, young elf. You're not as bad as I think you were."

Teneb nodded.  
They left and for the rest of the night, Harry had Teneb practicing harder than ever.

The young wizard was decided to bring the elf to a level where he would find a challenge. The next days followed the same pattern:



waking up at 4 A.M., training, breakfast, lessons, lunch, lessons, training, going to bed.

Then on one morning, Harry realized that today was the day the presentation was to take place.

Both of them had a light practice this time, Teneb working on his archery. Harry was mentally smirking as Teneb raised his bow. Each time the elf had it in hand, he looked like a kid in a candy store.

Harry never practiced archery with the elf, and took this opportunity to work on his elemental abilities.

Once they were done, they headed silently for breakfast.

The ceremony would take place in the end of the afternoon in the Dragon's den.

It was a large round area, with a stand erected on one side, for those who wanted to watch the ceremony, meaning most of the riders.

Harry spent the afternoon outside, wandering on the island with Shadow. It wasn't often he had a quiet day like this one and he, for once, was enjoying the peace. He stopped on the cliff where he tried to kill himself and looked at the sea. The sound of the waves hitting the base of the cliff was appeasing, as was their hypnotic movements. Harry filled his lungs, enjoying the salty and fresh feeling of the air, before exhaling deeply.

He looked towards Hogwarts, his home, feeling, at this moment at peace with himself. He didn't feel the despair he had experienced on Christmas, now only sure of one thing. As soon as the binding ceremony was finished, he would go back to his world. Once he would be bonded, he would have permission to leave the island. The second year was mainly used to perfect the riders' skill with their dragon with the help of their mentor and the other riders, but that was something he knew he could learn alone. Moreover Voldemort was still there. Since the destruction of London, Voldemort had continued his attacks, progressing quickly. The wizarding world, thanks to Fudge's stupidity wasn't ready. The Dark Lord was on a killing-spree. He didn't care about Muggles anymore. He was attacking in the open,



destroying and killing as much as possible. Harry knew this all too well, as he had to witness everything. He would have break down once again, had it not been for the Sowaroc's necklace. Each times he woke up from a vision, he clutched it, and slowly the memories faded a little. They didn't disappear, but were dimmed so they didn't haunt him. This had been the only thing preserving his sanity.

An hour before the ceremony's start, he came back to the Headquarters, being careful not to let anybody see him with Shadow.

He went straight to his dorms after taking care of the stallion. He had still half an hour left and remained on his bed, daydreaming. Fifteen minutes before the ceremony, all the other Daryns had left and he stood up. He was already wearing part of the outfit required for the presentation, all he had to do was to put the white tunic on, instead of his usual shirt.

Five minutes later he was ready and exited the dorm. He walked a few corridors, left the building and had just took a few steps when someone grabbed his arm. He turned and came face to face with a smirking Garth.

Looking up, he saw his whole gang standing behind him: Xjahl, Vlad, Ribor and Chrisianne.

"Where do you think you're going, human?" the young Magis said maliciously.

"None of your concern, now, let me go."

The Magis chuckled.

"I don't think so."

Harry turned to face the little group.

"Let. Me Go."

He wasn't going to support this any more. His talk with his parents had given him one thing, confidence. They were proud of him and he wouldn't let them down.



"You really think you can go to the presentation. You're really dumb you know, you're just gonna make a fool of yourself! Renounce, you're worthless. Admit it."

Harry looked at him with cold eyes.

"Now that you have finished your little speech, could you let me go. I believe you're going to be late."

He didn't wait for his answer and freed his arm, walking away.

He didn't go far away.

"Why you little...!" he heard the pounding of feet behind and had just the time to duck Garth fist.

Acting on pure reflex, Harry fell into a defensive stance. He caught the surprised look on Garth's face. But this didn't last long, as the young Magis lunged at him. Not really willing to harm him now, he was saving that for the binding ceremony, Harry just parried his blows or ducked them.

Garth was growing more and more mad. Finally he exploded.

"You're nothing but a coward, like your must have been! You can't even fight back."

That was it. Before he could add something, Harry's fist collided with his nose, breaking it.

He looked at the human, raising his hand to his nose and looking at the blood on them, shock painted on his every features.

"How could have you dared!"

He turned to his little gang.

"Get him!"

"With pleasure," replied Ribor.

Then Harry fell into his kick-duck-kick parry-retaliate-dodge pattern.



He hit Vlad on his temple, knocking him out. Chrisianne was soon thrown in a tree and knocked out. He knocked Ribor in the stomach before tripping him. The tall Elemental crashed on Garth. Only Xjah! was left. They faced each other.

"You're better than I thought, human, but still too weak for us."

Harry didn't bother to answer.

The elf leaped at him, he ducked a fist but was hit in the shoulder.

"Weakling" stated Xjahl.

Harry immediately retaliated, butting in practice everything he had learned, he hit the elf on the chest, then taking advantage of the shock grabbed his arm and flipped him to the floor. Xjahl pulled on his arm, trying to make him fall, but Harry freed himself. The elf managed to come back to his feet, a bit dizzy, only to be hit on the temple, thus rending him unconscious.

Harry sighed and resumed his walk, when suddenly, he felt a sharp and excruciating pain in his back. He turned around and saw Garth smirking, a bloody knife in his right hand.

He felt himself go numb. Everything was becoming dizzy.

"You won't go anywhere, human" he spat viciously. He approached him and grabbed his collar, shoving him in the nearest tree, making Harry gasped as a wave of pain shot from his back.

But Garth's attention was distracted by a flicker of gold.

"Where did you find that!"

He took it in his hand and pulled it off.

"You're not worth it."

This was the last thing Harry heard before darkness engulfed him.



Teneb looked around. So far the day had been great. The riders were all settled in the stands and the dragons had started to come and land. Teneb was watching them in awe.

Even the riders were surprised as a Sowaroc and an Emnag showed up. Those dragons rarely came as it was rare that they linked with someone.

The golden scales of the Sowaroc reminded him of Harry's necklace. Frowning, he looked around for him.

He wasn't there, as where Garth and his friends. His frown deepened and he turned to Inir.

"Hey, do you know where the others are?"

Inir looked around and shrugged.

"No idea, but they should arrive anytime now."

"I heard them talking about the human" Arnelle cut in.

"Really?" Teneb was a bit worried now.

"Yes, something about teaching him something."

Teneb might not like the human a lot, but he didn't want him to suffer more than he already had.

"I have forgotten something in the dorm, I'll be back in a minute."

"Hurry up" said Malisa, "it'll start in a few minutes."

"Don't worry."

Teneb sped up to the Headquarter when he heard a crash.

He headed in the direction of the sound and what he found shocked him.

Garth and his little friends were surrounding Harry, kicking him and he saw Harry's necklace in Garth's hand.



"Teneb!" exclaimed Vlad, spotting him.

He smiled a bit at the elf but was taken aback by the cold look on his face as he looked at Harry.

Bruises were starting to appear. But he could see that the others had earned their fair share of wounds too.

"What happened?" he was a bit shocked at the harsh tone of his voice.

"Oh! Well, the human wanted to go to the ceremony and we stopped him."

"You... stopped him?" repeated Teneb, raising an eyebrow.

"Well, he didn't obeyed us, so we had to use force."

Teneb looked sharply at Vlad. They were good fighters, but Harry was far better.

"And?"

"You won't believe us! He beat us. He knocked us out and was leaving when Garth managed to get up."

"Really, I thought you were knocked up."

"Well I weren't" said Garth, "I got up and stabbed him in the back. It will teach him not to mess with us."

Teneb didn't hear the end of the sentence. He looked at Harry's figure on the floor, noting that the others were watching him. Sure enough, he saw some blood underneath the human. He approached him and knelt at his side, rolling him gently on one side.

A moan escaped Harry's lips and Teneb gasped. The wound was deep and Teneb knew that Garth must have hit the spine. The human seemed to have internal bleeding too.

"What are you doing Teneb? Come on! You're going to be late for the ceremony."



"I'm checking him up." He said looking at the youths who were now standing a few meters away.

"Why?" asked Chrisianne, a bit bewildered.

"Because he's dying!"

"It's a living being!" Teneb was getting angrier and angrier now.

"What's up with you! If he died, well, good riddance, he won't be missed! Now come on, you don't want to miss the presentation just because this human was stupid enough to disobey us."

Teneb looked at her. What should he do? He could follow them, leaving Harry to his Fate, or he could stay there, and help him as elves were supposed to do. What should he do? What mattered the most? What he was told? Or his morals?

*"You'll have to make your own choice."*

The words of the human rang to his ears.

"What's up with me? I'm just saving his life!"

"Are you alright? You're helping a human!" the disgust was evident in the Magis tone.

"Yes"

"Do you know what you're doing?" asked Garth in a threatening tone.

"I am."

The Magis took a few steps in Teneb direction but was stopped as Teneb summoned his sword and pointed the blade at him.

He look at the weapon then at Teneb.

"Traitor," he spat, "filthy traitor."

"Coming from you, I'll take that as a compliment."



Garth sent him a scornful glance, before taking a few steps backwards. He walked away, but then stopped and turned to Teneb.

"Oh! Bury this with him." He threw Harry's necklace at him.

Teneb met his eyes with a stony look.

They left after a few seconds, hurrying to the presentation. He drew his attention back to Harry, checking for a pulse and trying to stop the bleeding. Feeling a feeble pulse, he started to panic.

"Harry, wake up! Wake up!"

Suddenly, the young wizard stopped breathing.

Teneb looked at him in shock. He bowed his head and slowly took the human hand, putting his necklace in it.

"May you rest in peace."

Suddenly, the necklace glowed golden. Startled, Teneb took a few steps back starrng at the glowing form of Harry.

Suddenly, he heard something behind him.

He gasped.

Before him was standing a mighty Sowaroc, his whole body glowing, but he couldn't help noticing the anger radiating from the dragon.

## What happened?!

**A minute before:**

Garth and his friends had arrived. They had healed themselves on the way to the Dragon's den. They approached the other Daryns. Suddenly a roar could be heard from the dragon.

Everyone looked their way. Suddenly the Sowaroc leaped in the air and disappeared. The other dragons were agitated.



"I will."



Very well, just know that we'll take you to the depth of his mind. Are you ready to face this?

"I am" was Teneb's answer. He wasn't very sure, but wanted to help.

Well in that case, enter a trance and trust us.

In a few seconds Teneb was in a deep trance and felt himself being dragged somewhere.

Then, he penetrated Harry's mind.

Thanks a lot to everyone who reviewed: it really means a lot to me.

knot2be : **blushing horribly** Well, I don't know what to say... Thank you a lot. I really hope you'll continue to enjoy this story.

goodshiplollypop : Thanks a lot for the review !!

AcGirl : I'm going to read your stories as soon as possible. Thanks a lot for reviewing.

Chocolate Frog : Thank you very much, I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

Akima : Thank you a lot for the review..

Liedral : Teachers' bashing will come in a few chapters, three I think, but I'm not sure... Thanks for reviewing.

Crab : Merci. Bon, tu as eu un avant goût de la vengeance de Harry, même si la situation n'a pas tourné en sa faveur. Sinon, on va revoir Rexeran (le vrai dragon) dans le chapitre suivant et il aura une assez grande importance plus tard. Merci encore !

xxkkangxx : Thank you for the review and understanding the fact that there may be grammar or spelling mistake in this story...

Brion : Thanks for reviewing.



Fire Mistress : Thanks a lot for the review.

Sugar Quill : Thank you, hope you enjoyed this chapter.

? ? ? : Thank you a lot !

neocat-HP-420 : I hope you liked that chapter. Thanks for reviewing.

Jordan : Thanks for he review. Sure Demenor is to blame, but he isn't the only one... Your question will be answered later, but you can try and guess.

Golden Eagle : Thank you for reviewing !

Bill Weasley : Thank you a lot. I hope you liked this chapter too.

Siddalee Walker : Did you enjoy it ? Hope so. Thank you for reviewing.

Scrat : Prejudices and discrimination... Those can lead to strong feelings and strange behaviors, not that this is an excuse.... Well, your ideas are interesting and I'll think about it. Anyway, thanks for reviewing !

Lady Pheonix Gryffindor : Thank you a lot and sorry for the end of the chapter...

Illustrious Sorrow : Thank you very much !

? ? ? : Merci beaucoup. A propos du test de philo, disons juste que ça n'a pas été un franc succès....

Estrella de la Tarde : I'm really glad you liked my stories ! Hope you enjoyed this chapter too.

Demon-Child : Harry will come back to Hogwarts later on. Hope you didn't lose your whole sanity... (but according to my friend, I'm crazy too, so...)

zaksgirllol : I'm going to write on the Ancestors' call from now on, but I had to get those ideas about this story first... Thanks a lot for the review.



Aurora : Well the presentation is kind of meeting between the dragons and the riders in training. The choice takes place during the binding ceremony. I hope you liked this chapter.

Rachel A. Prongs : Well, let me know what you thought of this chapter... Anyway, Harry received his necklace from the dragon that healed him when he tried to kill himself. Thanks a lot for reviewing and continue with your story, it's great !

Phoenix of Light : Thank you a lot ! Don't forget your story, it's truly brilliant !

BloodRedSword : Thank you ! Keep writing too !

Phynix : Thanks a lot for reviewing.

JUDGMENT : Master's beating will come soon don't worry, they won't escape it ! Thanks for the review and continue with your story !

cherrity : Soon, in a few chapters. I still have a few facts to put in this story before Harry shows his abilities. Thanks a lot for the review.

Unicor's brother : Well, I wasn't lucky with my test, but even if I had I have to keep it until the end of the year, I can't drop it (nor can I drop any of my subjects... unfortunately) Anyway thank you for the review.

Korinna Myorin : Thanks a lot !

Zoot Vampiric Vampire : Thank you a lot for your review. It had me thinking and changing a bit what I had planned for the next chapters, as I saw you were right in a way. I hope you'll like how it'll turn.

Elsbethelf : Thanks a lot for your review. Well, about the Ancestors'call, I'll start working on this one from now, but as I'm quite busy lately, I don't now how long it'll take me to write the next chapter.

Soulless : Thank you so much for reviewing. I hope you liked this chapter !

Maria : Thank you for reviewing. Well as for Harry and Teneb, well, they can't really be compared, as they have different abilities.



shdurrani : Thank you for reviewing.

icedrake : Thank you. I hope you enjoyed this chapter too.

Maab : They'll be an encounter between Harry and Demenor, I have it planned, but it will take place later in the story.

Otaku freak : Thank you for reviewing.

Orion : Thanks a lot !

LoMaRiBa : It's coming closer. You just have to wait for about three or four chapter (I think). Thank you for the review.

Zed : Thank you a lot !

Forgotten Loss : I made my mind on not writing a Harry becomes all powerful story and hope I'm not falling in this type, even if I enjoyed them. Thanks for reviewing.

Phoenix Flight : Were you right ? Anyway, thank you for reviewing. I hope you liked this chapter.

alana : No, it's a meeting, the choice is during the second ceremony, which should take place in a few chapters. Thank you a lot for reviewing.

ER : Thanks you a lot for the review !

Chikujin : Thanks for reviewing. 'hope you didn't have to experiment the joy of an hangover...)



## **Chapter Eleven**

Teneb looked around. He was in a bedroom. Suddenly he heard shouts downstairs, someone running. A woman enter the bedroom, looking panicked. She took a baby from a crib and held it against her chest. Teneb could hear shouts from downstairs then a cry and a small laugh. Footsteps were heard and the door was opened brutally. The man Teneb had seen before stepped in the room, wand raised. Evil was the only word to describe him.

The woman took a few steps backwards, holding her baby closer.

"Step aside"

"No, please, not Harry."

"Step aside, and you'll be sparred."

"No. Take me instead. Not Harry. Have mercy."

"Avada Kedavra."

A green light flashed in the room and the woman fell on the floor, dead, still holding her child.

"The last Potter..." whispered the man.

He raised his wand to the face of the baby.

"Avada Kedavra." Those two words were accompanied by a maniacal laugh.

Teneb watched with dread as the green light ran to the baby. He was expecting to see the lifeless body of the young child but the light seemed to rebound on him and hit the man. The scene started to fade but before it got completely dark he saw a lightning bolt shaped scar on the forehead of the baby who was now wailing.

"A survivor." stated a deep voice in the background.

The scene changed. He was now in a small cupboard.



"Boy!!"

Teneb was startled at the screech. There was a young boy, about six or seven, woke up, startled. He watched as he got dressed, putting several spiders aside as he did before getting out of the dark place, as he hurried to the kitchen and started to pull out cooking tools, as a horse-like woman, a bull-like man and a pig-like boy settle at the table, waiting for their breakfast, completely ignoring the little dark-haired boy as he struggled with a pan. He served them their food before taking a piece of bread and a glass of water which had been put on the counter...

"A boy." said the same voice

Another scene: the boy looked older, around eleven. He was in a little pub, surrounded by people trying to talk to him, to shake his hand.

Teneb could see his confused look.

"A celebrity."

Yet an other change. They were in a castle, in a class, a small man was standing on the desk, waving his wand in the air and pronouncing an incantation.

The children tried to imitate him with more or less success.

"A wizard."

This time he saw him surrounded by two people: a boy with flaming red hair, freckles and a girl with bushy-brown hair carrying a few books. They were laughing together, talking happily.

"A friend."

The scenery faded to be replaced with the sight of a cemetery.

He shuddered.

Two teenagers appeared, holding a cup. They looked confused. Suddenly a green light, three words 'kill the spare' and one of them



was down, dead. Teneb watched as the young dark haired boy was tied to a tombstone, as a little man took some blood from him and poured it in a cauldron with some ashes and his hand, and a man rose from the cauldron. Well, he didn't look really like a man: red eyes, snake-like face. The little man gave him a robe before stuttering to him, pointing to his arm. The tall man took a long stick, and waved it over the spot where the hand had been and suddenly a silver hand appeared. He touched the left arm of the little man, pressing on a dark thing and several other people dressed in black and wearing masks appeared and bowed to him. He addressed them before turning to the boy and starting to talk.

Teneb couldn't hear what they were saying but he saw the little man giving the wand back to the boy and untied him. The tall man and the boy stood face to face, bowed and raised their wand. A small fight ensued: the man was casting spells as the boy was dodging them. Suddenly they both cast a curse at the same time and the two lights collided, creating a golden link between them. Shadows started to appear, the boy who had been killed a few minutes before, an old man, a woman and finally the couple Teneb had seen first. Somehow the boy broke the link, ran, took the body of his fallen friend and summoned the cup before disappearing.

"A fighter."

Teneb was still wondering about the boy's identity, when it struck him, the scar! How could he be that stupid! This was Harry's memories, but seen from an other point of view.

The pace of the scenes quickened. Harry's life flashed before him. He starred, dumbfounded before the thing the human had to face... Suddenly he found himself surrounded by darkness, a thick dark fog encircling him. He looked around, panicked.

"Remember, light is your ally."

"What light?!"

"You must find your light."



*Light, light, light.... What light?! There's no light here, only darkness, despair...No hope...* Teneb shook his head, he mustn't give up. His guardian! Kaelia would help him.

As he concentrated on his guardian, he didn't see light leaking from his body and pushing the darkness away.

Teneb?

Kaelia!

What are you doing here?

I have to help Harry?

Why?

Teneb reflected on this question. Why?

Because I have too.

Why?

Because it's right.

Good, you have changed for the better young one...

Teneb was a bit confused by this. Had he changed? He pushed this thoughts away, now he had to concentrate on the task at hand.

What should I do Kaelia?

You must give him the will to live.

How?

You've seen his life, there must be something he wants to live for.

Teneb's mind was racing. What could made the human want to live? Not his powers. Duty? No. An image came back to his mind, three children, laughing happily.



His friends

Good, now concentrate on it.

Teneb obeyed, his mind focused on the joy he had seen in the children's face, their laugh, their carelessness, their complicity.

Slowly the darkness dimmed, turning a mild gray.

Thank you young one. said a deep voice.

We will bring him back now, added another voice lighter, more musical, trust us

Teneb relaxed. He trusted these two voices. There was a flash of light, a surge of power and suddenly he was back to his body.

He opened his eyes to come face to face with the Sowaroc and the Emnag.

You did well, young one.

Teneb bowed his head. He looked at Harry. The young wizard stirred and slowly opened his eyes. He blinked a few times, before looking around.

"What happened?"

"What do you remember?"

Harry looked closely at Teneb. There was something different about the elf.

"Well, Garth and his little gang ambushed me. We fought. I knocked them out and was about to go to the ceremony when this son of a backstabbed me. Now what happened?"

"Well, I came to see why you wasn't there and I found you unconscious, bleeding and Garth and his friends beating you up. I stopped them. They left to the ceremony, then the Sowaroc arrived, followed by the Emnag and I helped bring you back to the living."



At the word 'Sowaroc' Harry looked at the golden dragon.

"You saved me again. Thank you both." He said bowing at the two dragons.

There's no need to bow to us, young Dragonling. You are worthy of our care, said the Emnag.

This is the second time, we have to come to your help, little one. I'll make sure there is no third, said the Sowaroc looking towards the den with anger in his eyes.

Teneb shuddered. He didn't want to be the one to face the angry dragon.

"Don't," said Harry, pleadingly.

Why? They broke one of the oaths of the riders, never attack a peer. They must face their punishment.

"The bonding ceremony will be held in two months. I will have my revenge then. Your intervention could do more harm than good."

Teneb had to agree to this. If the others were to know Harry's connection to the golden dragon, it would only bring jealousy, envy and resentment to him.

The Sowaroc frowned at Harry.

I'm not sure that's wise, but I will follow your wish. But if we were to come to your help again, I will put a stop to this. However, be sure that no dragon will bond with those responsible of this.

Harry nodded, fastening his necklace around his neck. Seeing this, the Sowaroc softened.

Always wear it young one.

He turned to the other dragon, nodded, took off and disappeared.

The Emnag came closer to Teneb.



You proved yourself today, young one. You deserve my gift. A silver glow engulfed Teneb's right hand. He looked at it, curious. In his palm rested a necklace similar to Harry's, the difference being that his was silver, like the scales of the dragon facing him.

He bowed, thanking the mighty beast.

Don't take it off. We will see each other again.

Then the dragon disappeared.

Harry and Teneb looked at each other.

"Well I think we need to talk, but before we need to go to this ceremony," said Harry. "Come on."

They ran to the Den. Fortunately they weren't really too late. They took place in the back.

The dragons were still agitated and the Sowaroc and the Emnag hadn't come back. Demenor was finishing to recite the oath of the riders. Harry raised an eyebrow as he heard his so called mentor talk about solidarity, helpfulness, tolerance. Tolerance, what a laugh!

Then the Daryns stepped forwards and started to recite the Pledge.

*"We, Daryns, bearing the mark of the dragon,*

*Swear allegiance to the Nine, by their names and powers:*

*Seid and Cehra, keepers of the Water and the Earth*

*Phaist and Dia, bearers of the Fire and the Air*

*Altai, the wise and his companion, the graceful Aurine,*

*Des, the judge, guardian of the spirits*

*Gae, the kind, embodiment of Magic*

*Rexeran, ruler of them all, fair and brave "*



They bowed towards the dragon's constellation.

The dragons present roared, but the riders watching the ceremony couldn't help but feeling something was wrong. The dragons hadn't communicate at all with the future Daryns, although it was something that was common.

The last part of the ceremony came: all the Daryns came close to an altar. On it, stood an ornate cup. It was made of a metal whose fabrication people had long forgotten.

A dagger was laying next to it. The tradition was that every rider had to put one drop of his blood in it. The cup was filled with a silver swirling liquid. Nobody knew what it was, but it had been here since the first bonding between a dragon and an other being.

Harry went to the back of the line. He didn't want to do that, but he had to... Finally it was his turn. There was a red tinge of color in the liquid now. Sighing he took the dagger, and cut his left thumb. A drop blood formed on his finger and fell in the cup. No one noticed a faint glow around the drop as it came in contact with the liquid.

This marked the end of the ceremony. Silently, the dragons sprang in the air before disappearing.

The riders exchanged confused glances but shrugged.

Harry cast a look at Teneb, meaning 'Come on'. The two of them slipped away, unnoticed.

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Harry led Teneb to a room he had found earlier. It was his room and he hadn't planned on letting Teneb know about it. But this was the only where they wouldn't be disturbed.

"Well, what happened? I only remember seeing my friends then a blinding light and I woke up with my guardian screaming."

I had every right to yell at you. You let him get you like a beginner.



Shut up will you!

"Well you were barely alive when the two dragons arrived, they asked for my help and I accepted. You had retreated to the depths of your mind and they took me with them to retrieve you."

"They what!"

"They took me to your mind, to your memories, so that I could find something to give you the will to live."

Harry gave me an undecipherable look.

"My memories?..."

"Your whole life."

"You passed my shields this time?"

Teneb winced a bit. He remembered well the last time he had tried to enter the human's mind. It had felt like hitting a brick wall, a very thick wall.

"The dragons brought me. How come you have such strong shields?"

"To keep the noisy one out of my mind. I have a question though."

"Ask."

"Why did you help me? You could have let me there. Do you understand what siding with me means here?"

"I understand, but like you said I had to make my choice and it was the right thing to do."

"The right thing?"

"Whatever you may think about the elves, some of us have morals and values. And helping those in need is one of them."

"Even if it means going what you were taught to believe?"



"Even if it does."

There was a silence. Teneb wasn't sure what to do now. Harry's face was unreadable.

"I-I want to apologize," he said quietly. He looked down. Now that he had seen the life of the human, he felt bad, really bad. He looked up, waiting for Harry's answer.

The emerald eyes seemed to pierce him. Finally Harry spoke.

"My stay here has given me every reason to be wary of your kind. Before coming here, I thought the elves to be wise, tolerant beings, in tune with nature, unable to hurt anyone. Needless to say my illusions were quickly shredded into pieces. I only found defiance, discrimination, scornful, narrow-minded people, so caught up in their traditions that were becoming completely blind to anything else."

These words pained Teneb. The human had had faith in them but where had it led him? To his own destruction.

"When you blackmailed me into helping you, I only saw an other elf, power-thirsty, too blind to care about anything but himself. I guess I was wrong."

Teneb looked sharply at him.

"After what you did tonight, well... Thank you."

This time, Teneb wasn't believing his ears. The human was thanking him!

"I... I don't deserve to be thanked."

"Maybe, maybe not. It's up to me to decide."

There was a new silence, only broken by Harry.

"Are you sure of your choice? I mean, you're aware of what will happen once words of it spread to the riders. It won't be easy for you."



Teneb bit his low lip.

"I know that, but I know I'm right. Moreover, there is only two months left."

Harry looked at him.

"Well, I don't know if I can put everything behind me, but I'll try."

He smiled, the first real smile Teneb had seen from him when speaking with someone else, beside his guardian.

"I'm Harry Potter." he said extending his hand.

Teneb smiled back.

"I'm Teneb."

He shook his hand.

[illegible]

The reactions to this event were quite drastic. Everyone distanced themselves from Teneb. They didn't treat him bad. No, they didn't dare to do this. He was still the only son of the king's counselor and a friend of the prince. They just distanced themselves from him, as if he was holding a contagious disease. He was no longer the little prodigy. The teachers were avoiding talking to him as were most of his so-called friends. Only a few still stayed with him, Inir, Opheria and Kobalt. They may not approve it, but they didn't say anything against it, just ignored the subject.

It pained him a bit, but as he said to Harry, he now knew who were his real friends.

The first days had been awkward, none of them knew how to act around each other. Then, the uneasiness disappeared as their training for the bonding ceremony intensified. Teneb was spending three hours in the morning and four in the evening training with Harry. They progressed, but it was apparent that they each had their favored subjects. Teneb's were archery, much to Harry's dismay, Healing



magic, and hand to hand combat, he was also able to follow a trail like if it was indicated with flashing neon panels, while Harry's were sword-fighting, riding, offensive magic and elemental power. Both were skilled when it came to mind magic. They now were comfortable around each other, not best friends or anything like that, but partners.

Partners who were currently trying to beat each other.

Both of them had their sword raised to eye-level, eyeing carefully each other. Suddenly they lunged at each other. Their swords clanged loudly. Teneb pushed on his, trying to unbalance Harry. Thee young wizard smiled. He dropped on his feet and swept the ground to make the elf trip. However Teneb had fallen for this trick before and wasn't about to fall again for it. He jumped above it, instantly casting a blow aimed for Harry's chest. His sword met Harry's and he felt the vibrations of the metal in his arm. He didn't have time to dwell on it as he ducked a slash of Harry's sword. He retaliated, feinting on his right to strike at Harry's right side. He was trying to find an opening in the other's defense. They continued to exchange blows, matching each other in strength or rapidity.

Finally, Teneb saw it. Without thinking, he charged, putting all his strength in it. When he saw Harry moving, he cursed. He had been tricked, again. Seconds later he was on the ground, his sword a few meters away.

"I won." Harry stated smiling.

"Stop rubbing it in my face, will you?"

Harry offered him his arm.

Teneb took it and before Harry could do anything, he was on his back, on the grounds.

"Getting comfortable," asked Teneb, standing over Harry.

"That was cheating!"

"That was revenge."



Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Really? Then you won't mind me doing that!"

He grabbed Teneb's leg and pulled on it, sending Teneb to the ground.

"That means war."

Soon they were engaged in a hand to hand fight whose outcome was predictable: Teneb 1 Harry 0.

Are you done behaving like children?

You're no fun Arxeren, you know.

Well at least I don't have the maturity of a ten year-old.

Coming from someone who had the maturity of a four-year old, I'll take that as a compliment.

Thank you... Hey! It wasn't!

Harry laughed

Alright, now on more serious matters.

You couldn't be serious, even if you tried.

Could you shut up for a few minutes.

If you asked politely, I might consider it.

Harry!

Alright. I'm listening.

Good. You know you can train in the spirit plan.

Yes, you brought me there once.

I met with Teneb's guardian and we discussed your training.



Really.

We decided to bring you both in the spirit plan to train you together.

■ ■ ■

WHAT!! Sorry. Stop, rewind, play again.

We're going to bring you both to...

Alright, stop. Now tell me what did you drink before coming?

I'm serious, and before you say anything, serious as in S.E.R.I.O.U.S.

Spoilsport. But you didn't answer my question.

Harry...

Don't Harry me. You told me it wasn't possible for someone to see someone else's guardian, or meet with someone in the plan.

I know, I know. But Kaelia and me managed to bend the rules a bit...

Kaelia? The one you told me you had a date with?

Well, yes... but that's not the point, from now, you'll spend your morning training in the plan. Bye!

## Hey! Wait!

Too late, the spirit was gone, much to Harry's annoyance. He had still a few questions for the guardian. But this would have to wait. He glanced at Teneb who had the same glazed look as he knew he must be sporting right now.

"You learned it too?"

The elf nodded.

"Why have I a bad feeling about this?"

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Meanwhile, things weren't looking up in the wizarding world.

The attack on London had been the first of a long series. Each one as murderous as the last. Panic had followed the article about London's massacre. People were trying to leave the country. Unfortunately, other European countries were no longer safe and the only way to get to other continent was by Portkeys whose had been destroyed or by using muggle ways, something which was dangerous now. The Aurors had been too unorganized to be a threat to Voldemort's army, and by the time they managed to regroup, it was too late. Voldemort had already set up his base in the old Riddle house which had been transformed into a Fortress.

Their leader, thinking that Voldemort hadn't had the time to set up defenses ordered an attack against it, despite Dumbledore's warning. Most of the Aurors were sent, except those assigned to the protection of key-figures.

Very few returned and those who managed to escape brought horrific news:

Voldemort was turning himself in a Necromancer.

If panic had followed the first attack, now it was complete chaos.

[illegible]

"Come on Ron! We're going to be late!"

"Well if you had agreed to leave this bloody library sooner, we wouldn't be late!"

"I didn't force you to come with me!" she snapped.

Ron cast a glance at her. She looked completely worn out.

"Sorry Mione," he said, placing a hand on her shoulder.

The last days had been hard on them. Both their families had gone into hiding. They were put under the Fidelius charm and Dumbledore was the guardian for them. They couldn't have any sort of contact



with them. Moreover, the constant attacks were a continuous strain for everybody in the school. Each morning an owl at least was bringing a black letter to one of the students.

"No, it's me. I shouldn't have snapped at you like that, it was uncalled for."

Ron smiled at her.

"Well we're both sorry, so if what about forgetting this and run to DADA before Figg has our heads?"

"Excellent idea for once, my dear Ron."

"Lead the way, fair lady."

Smacking him on the head, they ran to the classroom, entering him as the professor started to take roll call.

"Sit down Mr. Weasley, same for you Miss Granger."

Both of them took their usual seats silently, panting a bit.

"Today, we'll learn about Dementors."

There were a few gasps in the room.

"Who can tell what are the effects of Dementors?"

Unsurprisingly, Hermione's hand was immediately up. But she wasn't the only one.

"Mr. Weasley?"

"A Dementor is a creature who sucks every happy feelings from you and makes you relive you your worst memories. They can also suck your soul when they give you the Kiss."

"Good Mr. Weasley, five points to Gryffondor. Now who can tell me what's the only way to protect yourself from a Dementor?"

Several people lifted their hands.



"Miss Sullivan?"

"You have to use the Patronus charm."

"Exact, five points to Ravenclaw. Now, to produce a Patronus, you have to focus on your happiest memory, then say the incantation: Expecto Patronum. The happier the memory, the stronger the charm. Now, a bit of theory about the spell, its effect and Dementors."

The class groaned, but started to take notes as the professor talked. Half an hour later she stopped.

"Good! Now put that away and take your wands, we're going to practice it a bit."

Soon the whole class was echoing with 'Expecto Patronum', giving Mrs Arabella Figg one hell of a headache.

As expected, none of them managed to produce anything. They were told to practice the spell and that they'd continue with this during next lesson.

They then headed towards Transfiguration which they had with the Hufflepuff this year. They hurried as today they will find their forms as animagi. They were quite excited and for Ron and Hermione, that was certain: should they have animagi forms, they would immediately join the group McGonagall was setting up for those who wanted to become Animagus. They entered the room and sat, setting their quills, parchment and textbooks on their desks and waiting for the rest of the class to arrive. Soon everyone was here, looking expectantly at McGonagall.

"Today as you all know, you are going to find your form. I will call your name and you'll step forwards. Approach this cup, fill a glass with some of the potion and put a drop of your blood in it. You can use the knife near the cup. If you have a form, it will appear in your glass. Susan Bones!"

The girl approached and cut her thumb, wincing a bit. She looked at McGonagall into her glass, her face breaking into a relieved smile.



"A butterfly." She said.

"Good, go back to your seat. Irene Davin."

The Hufflepuffs all went to the desk and few went back to their seats smiling. On the eleventh Hufflepuff, only four found a form: Susan, Maria which was a colibri, Maxim who was a bear and Ernie who was a horse. It was then the Gryffindors turn.

"Lavender Brown."

She stood up and walked to the cup. Minutes later, she was back to her seat, disappointed.

Seamus was a big gray dog.

"Hermione Granger."

She dropped the blood and looked at the swirling liquid expectantly. Nothing.

"Well..." started McGonagall, a bit disappointed. She had expected Hermione to have a form. Before she could continue, the liquid started to bubble.

"What!" she looked closely at it, the liquid had gone from translucent to a milky white, then a picture appeared in it.

"A Sphinx!" The teacher looked shocked. A magical animal... No wonder it took time to appear! "Very good Miss Granger." She gave the girl one of her rare smiles.

Dazed, Hermione went back to her seat.

"Cool Hermione!"

"Thank you Ron..."

Meanwhile, Neville had found his form: an eagle, which was rather ironic, knowing the flying ability of Neville.

Dean and Parvati didn't have any forms.



"Ronald Weasley."

Minutes later, Ron gave a whoop of joy.

"A tiger! Do you believe it! A tiger!"

"Mr Weasley, could you restrain yourself, I don't think Professor Snape would appreciate knowing you knocked down the potion he made for my classes."

This calmed Ron immediately.

The class continued without anymore interruption, all the students who had a form signing up for the private lessons to become Animagus.

Once it was done, they went back to the Tower, having still an hour before dinner. They spent it working for Hermione on a book of counter-curses, and in Ron's case on a Strategy book. Seeing Hermione reading was something usual, but Ron, that was quite uncommon. After Harry's disappearance, Ron had become more withdrawn. He had matured. He and Hermione had grown closer, but against everyone's expectations they didn't go out. Everyone had been waiting for that. Now that Harry was gone, it seemed natural to see the two remaining members of the Gryffondor trio together. It didn't happen. They were closer, as close as two people could be without being involved and highly protective of each other as a few people had found out the hard way. Malfoy won a week-long stay in the Hospital wing for calling Hermione a mudblood, threatening her, her family and taunting her about Harry. They were like two siblings, they could nearly act like the twins. As to the reason behind their will to learn, it was mainly to be prepared. They knew Voldemort would come for them and wanted to be able to protect themselves or their family. They were aware that should they encounter the Dark Lord, their chances to get out of it alive were close to nil, at least they would take as many Death Eaters as possible with them.

Finally it was dinner time. They headed to the Hall and sat, waiting for the food to appear.

However, nobody would have the heart to eat a lot this evening.



As the food appeared in the golden plate, an owls entered the Hall, sweeping towards the staff.

Frowning, Dumbledore took the envelope and tore it open. He read it and the usual twinkle in his eyes disappeared completely, his face was grave and solemn. He passed the letter to McGonagall who read it with wide eyes.

"Students, I have the regret to inform you of the Fall of Durmstrang."

Gasps and cries echoed in the room.

"Rescuers are searching for survivors, but most of the students were killed as well as the staff. I also received news of Beauxbâtons."

The silence was deafening.

"Voldemort's troops attacked this afternoon, the French school is now at siege."

[illegible]

Well, what did you think of it? Good, bad?

Thanks again to all who took time to review; it really motivates me.

Well I'll post individual thank you notes as soon as I'll have the time.

Bye

Naia



## Chapter Twelve

"Why do I have a bed feeling about it?"

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*I was right, we're doomed*, thought Harry sulkily. From Teneb's facial expression, he could say that identical thoughts were crossing his mind.

They were standing on a cliff, face to face, waiting for their guardians' instructions.

Alright, take one of your knife, you need to do a blood exchange to be able to see each other in the Spirit plane.

"A BLOOD exchange!" shouted the two youths at the same time, looking at each other with wide eyes.

I'm not deaf you know...

B-But a blood exchange means that will have a latent connection between us, stuttered Harry.

Good, you listen at least to one of the things I taught you. Where is the problem?

I resent that! And the problem is that I don't think neither of us want to have connection built between us.

## Why? You're friends, right?

We're partner, replied Harry, emphasizing the word partner.

That's the same thing...

Not exactly.

Well, though luck because you aren't getting out of this one. So shut up and concentrate.

Sighing, Harry brought his attention back to Teneb.



He didn't seem really overjoyed by this too.

"Well, I suppose we don't have a choice in the matter"

"Not really..."

Harry pulled out one of his throwing knives and made a small cut in his palm before passing the sharp blade to the elf.

Once he had cut himself, they pressed their palms against each other. Their hand glowed faintly and they felt a little tingle in their arms.

"Done," said Teneb, healing the cut.

Good, now go to the plane.

Seconds later, Harry found himself in the Spirit plane.

"So what are we going o do now?"

Arxeren appeared near him.

Train, my dear boy, train...

"Where is Teneb? I thought you said I'll be able to see and interact with hi in this plane?"

He should come in no time. He had a little less practice.

At this, they saw an elf popped out of thin air.

"Teneb!"

He looked towards them and walked in their direction.

"It worked!"

"Yes, where is your guardian?"

Behind you young one.



Harry whirled on his heel. He came face to face to face with an other dragon, which looked like an Emnag.

"Harry, this is Kaelia."

Harry bowed to the dragon before turning to Teneb.

"The crazy overgrown lizard here is my guardian, Arxeren."

He could see the corners of Teneb's mouth twitch. Arxeren didn't look really pleased at this introduction but the laughter of Kaelia stopped him from doing anything harsh.

Well, he snapped at the young wizard, I believe we're here to train, aren't we?

"Touchy aren't we?" smirked Harry.

Arxeren threw him a dirty look. Harry was going to regret having tease his guardian in front of Kaelia...

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Harry exited his trance, panting. What he had been doing had affected his body as well. He was sore, bruised and to put it simply, completely exhausted.

They had started slowly, dueling and using easy wandless spells and in Harry's case, with a wand too. The level of the spell got higher and higher and soon they were casting complex and powerful hexes. Once the duel was over, with Harry as winner, their guardian had them practicing a few new spells and again they summoned opponents. Once they were done with that, they had moved to Mind magic. In this field they each had their forte. More generally, Harry seemed to have a knack for fighting skills whereas Teneb was more adept at other fields like Healing, Pisting, Telekinesis... He was a good fighter, but not a natural.

The two youths completed each other, they were starting to form a great team, but the past year still hung between them, preventing them from becoming real friends.



Mind Magic was followed by Magic, then a duel against each other, and to finish, a fight: students against guardians who had taken a human form for once.

Harry and Teneb were crushed. Totally utterly crushed. They had always thought themselves as good fighters, quite above the average level of the Daryns. But they realized that they had still a long to reach the level of their guardians.

Shaking his head, Harry dusted himself and stood up.

"We should go Teneb, or they'll notice our absence..."

The elf sighed.

"A few more minutes, please..."

"Teneb," said Harry, warningly.

"Alright! I'm coming."

He straightened himself and followed Harry to their horses, before galloping back to the Headquarters. Harry dismounted behind Shadow's paddock so that nobody could see him riding the stallion. As they were already a bit late, they shifted to their Animagus' forms.

Over the past month, since the presentation's ceremony, Harry had worked on his forms and Teneb had asked him to teach it to him. The Potion should have taken a year to brew normally, but thanks to his friendship with Terio, Harry had managed to get hold of some. Once they had both been able to transform every parts of their body, they drank it and had been practicing their transformations since then. Teneb had three forms: an Emnag, a cougar and an eagle. Both had managed the feline forms and were working on the birds ones now. A snow leopard and a cougar were now running side to side towards the Headquarters. Both of them were rather big, a bit more than usual. Harry had the end of his tail, his ears and his paws white, blazing green eyes with golden streaks, and a silver lightning bolt hidden on his right shoulder. Teneb had a white mark around his muzzle making it look like a mask. His tail end was inky black, as were the tufts of



hairs on top of their ears, his right-front paw was marked with a small black crescent. His light blue, almost gray eyes were hypnotizing.

The day passed uneventfully. The teachers were growing harsher on the Daryns, as the bonding ceremony was approaching. They went on with their routine: get up, training : Arxeren and Kaelia were getting more and more exigent with them and they always ended quite sore and tired after these morning sessions; breakfast, morning classes, lunch, classes, free time which Teneb spent with Inir, Ophelia and Kobalt an Harry practicing his Magic with a wand or in the planes, either with Arxeren in the Spirit's one, or with his parents in the Soul's one. Harry had gone a few more times in the second plane and talking with his parents or some other people who wished to talk to him had eased his mind a bit. With them he could talk about his fears, his nightmares, his doubts, they would listen and guide him on his way. Then it was training time again. Each night they crawled up to bed, exhausted but conscious of their progresses. However, this was taking it's roll on Harry. Because of his nightmares, he couldn't have a quite night of sleep, having to witness Voldemort's doing over the wizarding world. The bags under his eyes were getting bigger and bigger and despite his efforts to hide it, his weariness was starting to show: shorter temper, uncontrollable reflexes... He had put a hiding charm on his face, but he knew he wouldn't be able to go on like this.

This night, Harry laid on his bed, dreading the moment he would fall asleep. But, in the end Morpheus was the strongest and Harry's eyelids fell, sending him in his haunting dream-world.

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*Voldemort was standing in front of a building. You could see that fights had been occurring there not a long time ago. There were holes in the walls, burns, rumbles, cracks...*

*Death Eaters were assembled before him.*

*"Death Eaters!"*

*A roar answered him.*



*"We're standing strong, the world fears us again, the Dark Mark is rising everywhere. Durmstrang has fallen, and today Beauxbâtons will meet its doom too. Today we'll strike. Show no mercy!"*

*An other roar. The Death Eaters were getting excited now.*

*"Tomorrow morning, there will be only one obstacle left on our path," the Dark Lord paused, "HOGWART!"*

*A silenced fell on the people.*

*"But not for long! We're powerful, more than we've ever been and this time the old mudblood-lover won't be able to stop us! Hogwarts shall fall and then, we'll reign!"*

*Roars.*

*"The world will finally be purged of its filth and the pureblood will stand above as they should have a long time ago. For we, the ones of pure blood are the one fit for the grand task of commanding. The World will be our!"*

*Hadn't the situation be serious, it would have been ridiculous: a half blood was pushing wizard to slay the ones of muggle blood...*

*Cries answered Voldemort's speech. The Death Eaters were completely excited now.*

*"To Beauxbâtons!" yelled Voldemort.*

*Immediately, the cloaked men apparated to the French School.*

*The French school was already quite damaged. It had been under siege for about a month now and it was showing.*

*Most of the army was stationing around the French building, except for those close to Voldemort who had just appeared. The leaders of the different parts of the Dark army walked up to Voldemort and bowed to him. The Dark Lord looked at them, pleased with what he saw. Before him was standing a werewolves, a vampire, two Death Eaters, a Dementor, a Demon, a Dark Elemental, a Troll, and a Beast*



*tamer which was responsible for the team of timers which organized the Dark Beast which had joined them.*

*"Report?"*

*One of the Death Eaters stepped forwards, a bit shakily which pleased Voldemort: he relished in the fear he inspired his men.*

*"The defenses are weakening. We had broken through three quarters of them. I Think the siege is taking their toll on them as they don't retaliate to our attacks with as much strength as they did at the beginning."*

*"Good, be ready to attack in an hour. We're going to finish this once for all. Yvan, you and Zanya will coordinate it."*

*"Thank you my Lord," he bowed deeply and stepped back to the other Death Eater, his wife, apparently.*

*Voldemort gave his order to the other leaders before dismissing them.*

*"Lestrangle!" he called out suddenly.*

*The man, Yvan turned and faced his Lord.*

*" Yes Master?"*

*"Bring me Wormtail."*

*The Lestranges left and minutes later, a short balding man ran to Voldemort. Panting he bowed to him and waited for the Dark Wizard to speak.*

*"Did you find the book Wormtail?"*

*"Y-Yes my Lord," he rummaged through his robe before handing Voldemort a small brown leather book. Immediately the eyes of the Dark Lord lit up and tore the book from Wormtail's hands.*

*"Djaisra's diary," he whispered, passing his finger on the cover as if not daring to open it.*



*He pocketed the book in his robes before turning his attention back to the man before him.*

*"Good Wormtail. Your job there is done. I want you to do the same at Hogwarts: find any information concerning the school defenses, state, the people who live there, their weakness, if some are likely to turn to us. I want a detail report at the end of the week. We'll launch our first attack then."*

*During the next hour, Voldemort walked through his troops, exciting them.*

*Then the Dark army was ready. Voldemort amplified his voice.*

*"Today we'll win!"*

*The Dark fighters cheered.*

*"Today, this place fall!"*

*Cheers*

*"Today the Darkness will rule!"*

*"Voldemort! Voldemort!..." the Army was chanting his name. Voldemort smirked. He had done a good work with them. Now all he had to do was launch his army of puppets against the School.*

*He raised his wand and suddenly the Dark Mark appeared in the sky.*

*Immediately a deafening roar erupted from the rank of the Dark soldier as they rushed to the French school.*

*The battle started.*

*The Dark army was swarming the place. The French soldiers stood no chance and many of them were slaughtered. Slowly the last defenses started to crack under the hundreds of spells cast. Voldemort encountered several bad surprises: a vampire triggered a rain of silver arrows which cost the Dark Lord several werewolves and vampires. Traps had been set up. But they could only slowed*



*down Voldemort as for each Dark soldier out, two came to take his place.*

*Finally the last ward fell, allowing full access to the school. Bellowing at the top of their lung, they ran into the building.*

*Voldemort's smirk widened as he saw this. He was standing, with his closer Death Eater on a nearby hill about a kilometer away of the Battle. He decided to let his men have a little fun with the inhabitants of the school. He wouldn't stop them.*

*As quite a lot of people was inside the school started to glow.*

*BAM!!*

*A huge explosion took place. Voldemort fell on the floor as the shock wave hit him. He scrambled back to his feet and cursed. Instead of the magnificent building which had once been the magical school of France, there was a huge crater. All the people within two hundred meters were dead, the others were either injured or knocked out.*

*He cursed loudly and turned to his follower by his sides.*

*"Follow me, we're going to teach them not to mess with me. Haphazard Street."*

*The twenty DeathEaters nodded silently and apparated away.*

*They appeared in a calm street, the lights cast shadows on the tart, nobody was out. A small cat could be seen at a corner, eyeing the strangers with caution.*

*"Destroy" hissed Voldemort. "Kill them all, do whatever you want with them, but let's this be a lesson to those fools. Nobody best Voldemort." His voice was a deadly whisper, barely audible.*

*What followed would forever stay marked in Harry's mind. Never, in all the vision he had experienced had he seen such cruelty.*

*They crept in the house, storming in the bedroom, sometimes killing the people on the spot, other times using other ways. They put a five*



year-old girl under Imperius and forced her to kill her parents by slicing their throat, slowly, before making her jump of the window.

They raped some women in front of their family, forced parents to kill their children. Let some bleed to death, cast spell that made them burn from inside, putting them on fire, used Crucio several times... Every way possible to kill or give pain was used.

As Harry was watching helplessly at a girl being tortured, he was jerked awake.

He sprang on his bed, to meet a pair of worried eyes.

"Teneb? What are you doing?"

The young elf relaxed a bit and sit besides Harry. He opened started to tell him what had happened.

### **Flashback**

He had fallen asleep quickly and had been dreaming as usual, then his dream had been replaced by a battle beside a huge building. People dressed in black were attacking and then it exploded.

A strange one with blazing red eyes stood up and popped out to a street. There, with other men he started to torture the inhabitants.

Teneb shuddered as he came to this part of his story. He had never seen that much cruelty. Elves' children were sheltered all their life, they never had to face the hardships of life.

He had been woken up panting by a loud sound. He could hear a strong wind outside as the windows cracked. He looked around, sweating, trying to clear his mind from what he had just seen.

His attention was diverted by the sound of trashing on his right. He glanced at the sleeping form of Harry. The human was restless and sweating. He could see his lips moving in silent prayers or screams.

Without thinking twice about it, he got up and walked to Harry's bed, shaking him.



### **End of the Flashback.**

"You finally woke and that's all."

Harry didn't look in Teneb's eyes.

"What was this building?"

"The one with the red eyes?"

"Yes."

"Don't you remember what you saw in my mind?"

"Not really. I remember some important facts but there other things that I can't remember."

Sure, we can't have him know all your secrets... said Arxeren

Harry was a bit relieved at that.

What does he knew? And why was he able to see my dream.

Well the basics; your life story at his simplest version: Halloween's night, a bit of your life with the Dursleys, the Sorcerer's stone, the Diary, Sirius, the Tri-wizard Contest, Voldemort's resurrection.

Well enough as far as I'm concerned

If you say so...

"It was Beauxbâtons, the French school for wizards and witches."

"They attacked a school!"

"Welcome to my life," answered shortly Harry.

There was a silence as both of them were deep in their thoughts.

"Why were you seeing that? When did it happened?"

Harry sighed.



"This night."

"But... How?"

"Do you see this scar?" he pointed to the scar which had made him so famous in his world. "You know how I got it, right?"

Teneb nodded.

"Well you know you can't repeat this to anyone, don't you?"

An other nod.

"Good, to sum up, this scar links me to Voldemort: I can see what he's doing at times."

"Okaayy. Does it happen often?"

Curiosity had got the better of Teneb. Elves were curious as long as they deemed the subject worthy of their interest.

"Every times he does something when I sleep, which means every night lately."

Once again Teneb didn't know what to say. What could he say? He knew a lot of things about the human, more than Harry knew about himself.

He nibbled his low lip, a clear sign of his uneasiness.

"Why did I see it too?"

"I don't know, it has never happened before."

I know why! said Arxeren in a singsong voice.

Then why don't you tell us if you're so smart?

Come to the plane, it'll be easier to explain there.

It'd better be.



Come there immediately.

Alright, you're so easy to tick off...

Harry didn't wait for his guardian to reply as he reported his attention to Teneb, ignoring the angry shouts of the spirit.

"You know?"

"Yes."

"Let's go then."

They nodded and found themselves quickly in the Spirit plane.

Their guardians were already there.

OK, we don't have a lot of time, so listen carefully stated Kaelia. You remember the Blood Exchange we made you perform? Seeing their nods, she continued. Well, one of the possible effect of this is the apparition of a light mental link between the two who performed the exchange.

She was cut by two stunned cries.

"You mean we're linked!"

Our hearing is still good... interrupted Arxeren. For now you're only able to perceive the strong emotions of the other or the things he sees under a very stressful situation. It's, for now, a kind of empathic link.

If you want, continued the female guardian, we can help you improve it to the stage of a full mind speech link.

Harry and Teneb glanced at each other.

"No offense Teneb, but I'm not ready to do that, not yet..."

"None taken."

If you ever change your mind, warn us.



You should go back to sleep... Tomorrow you have your training as usual. added Arxeren.

Groaning, Harry, followed by Teneb went back to his plane. He looked at his companion who seemed quite troubled. He yawned loudly.

"I'm going back to bed, Voldemort must be done now" 'Or at least I hope...' he added in silent thoughts.

"Wait."

Teneb barely whispered this word but Harry stopped dead in his track.

"What?"

Teneb fidgeted with his fingers, looking quite unsure.

"I-I think you deserve to know more about me and my people."

"And how?"

"My memories."

Harry was stunned. Was the elf saying what he thought he heard?

"Are you sure of your..."

Teneb nodded slowly.

Harry pondered on this.

On one hand he was a bit reluctant: looking in Teneb's mind would mean that he had to let him in his, something he didn't really look forwards to. He stared at the elf, trying to see his motives for this. Could he trust him, trust him completely? Teneb had saved his life, given the choice he had stood by him. If he didn't deserve his trust yet, he deserved his respect at least and the truth. Having made up his mind, he took Teneb outstretched hand.



" I accept your proposition and the return will allow you to vision my memories too, up to a certain level, of course. There are things better being ignored."

" Let's agree on a mutual respect of our shielded privacy."

"Agreed. Ready?"

They sat, leg crossed on Harry's bed, face to face and entered a deep trance.

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Teneb entered Harry's mind like he had done months ago. But this time he didn't encounter the walls that had stopped him before. He viewed Harry's memories, He had already seen a good part of them but hadn't been able to remember them. Once he was done, he didn't regret his decision, the human was worthy of his respect and maybe of his friendship.

Harry's easily went in Teneb's mind. He could have any time before, but he had morals and invading somebody's else privacy was out the question. But he had the permission of Teneb now. He decided to let the elf's mind show him and not to pry.

First he saw the childhood of Teneb. His mother, Ylesa, a courtier at Horevald, his father, Doryan, the king's counselor and Deila, his little sister formed a close family. The children, in the elves' society spent their ten first years with their mother. Then the father became responsible for the education of his sons and his heir. In general, elves didn't have a lot of children. Three children was really rare. The sons was trained in fighting, thinking, philosophy... The daughters were sent to an institution. This was solely dedicated to the education of young elves. They spent ten years under the tutelage of the Doijas, the priestess whose lives were dedicated to Lunai, the Moon Goddess, while the Deisers were serving Solyen the Sun God. But the sons didn't have to go to their temple. They could be educated by other people depending of what they wanted to be. Only those desiring to be clerks, searchers, priest or sage where sent to the Deisers. Teneb was sent to the court with is father at ten and his training started.



Harry saw as he studied under the authority of the masters in the castle, as he first held a bow, at the age of thirteen, as he nursed the bruises got during physical training... He watched as he was presented to Celen, the proud young prince, a bit too full of himself... He witnessed the fight that issued from this meeting and its dead-end. It marked the beginning of the complicity between the prince and Teneb.

They grew up together. Celen trusted Teneb as the young elf seemed to always been truthful with him and it was obvious to everyone that Teneb would be Celen's counselor. As they turned fifteen, they passed the Ritual. The elves had a lifespan ten times superior of the one of a human. They grew up until twenty then stabilized, and aged very slowly once they got over 500 year-old: a 700 year-old elf would look like a 35 year-old human. Each time an elf reach the age of fifteen, they would have to pass the Ritual, it was a kind of passage to adulthood and responsibilities. At dusk they were sent alone into the Norcasia, the forest encircling the elves' kingdom. They were led to a glade and left there for the night. They had to come back to the castle. Failure generally meant death as the forest was dangerous.

Harry watched his trials in the forest: his encounter with a werewolf, a chimera. His fight against a bred of Acromantula, his wonder before a herd of unicorns.

Finally he experienced Teneb's joy at receiving the mark of the Dragonmasters. Celen was happy for his friend, but sad at knowing he wouldn't be able to see him for at least one year.

Then came the memories of his time at the headquarters.

The memories started to fade and Harry came back to reality. Teneb had had a quiet and enjoyable childhood and had his future assured. He had jeopardized all of this for his morals. He didn't know if he would have been able to do this...

The two youth starred at each other. Their eyes spoke of their mutual respect.

"We should got to sleep..." said Harry.



Troubled, Teneb nodded and went back to his bed, but neither of them could sleep.

The next morning, once they were back to the real plane, after their training with their guardian, Harry faced Teneb. He had hesitated a lot and was still unsure about it, but he knew it was right.

Cautiously, Harry unsheathed one of his daggers, not his personal one but an other, and looked at it, pondering over something. He then looked up at Teneb. Slowly he stretched his arm, offering the dagger to him, the blade pointed toward his own chest, the handle towards the elf.

Teneb's eyes widened and he looked totally stunned by this.

The exchange of weapon in this fashion was called the Brotherhood ritual. When two fighters exchanged their weapons the handle first, they were asking for the other to become their fighting brother, the one they would fight back to back with, with who they trust their life. It was nearly as strong as a blood link and once you had accepted it, you couldn't back down.

Shaking, he grasped the handle and accepted the dagger. Then he took one of his own and repeated the gesture. Harry accepted it with relief and smiled.

Nothing was said, they didn't need it.

So, now that this is done, what about our offer?

Harry looked at Teneb, who apparently had received the same message from Kaelia and they laughed.

Teneb was surprised by the change in Harry's behavior and face. He hadn't seen the human this open, this carefree before. His face wasn't guarded and unreadable anymore.

Yes, you dolt! When do you want to start?

For that I could decide not to teach you...



But you know you love me!

Arxeren sent him the equivalent of a roll of eyes.

Sometimes I wonder why I'm doing it!

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The next weeks passed in a blur: Harry intensified their training as the ceremony came closer. Things went easier after the ritual. They were still sometimes a bit awkward around each other but was starting to form a great team, odd but efficient, one that could become legendary.

Before they knew it, they woke up one morning, realizing that today was the first day of the bonding ceremony. They got up early and for once didn't train as hard as they usually did. It was just a little warm up for the trials of the upcoming day. They dressed up: The robes for this were blood red, with a golden trim. They were sleeveless and large, allowing ample movements. Under they wore black trousers and a thin black shirt. Harry and Teneb both wore a thin black leather belt which could be easily pulled off and used as an arm. At their side, hang their swords, in their sheaths. Two throwing knives were fixed on each forearm, what looked like little decorative spikes on their belts were in fact darts, most of them a bit poisonous, but not lethal. They wore boots. Harry had fixed a dagger on each of them, being careful that they didn't prevent him from moving freely. Teneb had favored two knives. The daggers were useful for close combat, something Teneb, despite a good level, didn't like.

Both of them had their bows and quivers stropped on their back. They had equipped their horses with great care after having checked the for any injuries. Both of them had simple trappings, not fancy ones. They knew that the others would use their best but preferred using some on which they could rely. They put protection on the legs of both of their stallions., brushed them, checked their hooves before putting anti-tripping, anti-sliding spells on them. They then led them near the Den.



Daryns weren't allowed to bring their horses, they had to come to their call. Both Teneb and Harry had carved small whistles they always had on them as well as their necklaces.

Once Shadow and Myst were settled and ordered to stay there until they were called, Harry and Teneb looked at each other.

"Well, Let's give them the shock of their life."

Seeing Harry's smirk, Teneb was happy to be his friends and returned the smirk, he couldn't wait to see the faces of the riders when they'll see Harry's power...

They walked towards the Den, unaware of the stares they got from the riders they passed. It had shocked a lot of people to see Teneb befriend the human and everyone beside Inir, Kobalt and Opheria had then avoided him. But as they saw him and the human walking with large strides to the Den, they couldn't help but felt a bit of awe: Both of them were tall, dark-haired, heavily armed, had the same determination on their face, and a similar figure, the main difference residing in Teneb's elvish features; they radiated power.

They arrived at the entrance of the Den and stopped. They shared a last look before entering it.

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Demenor was in the stands ready for the opening of the ceremony. He surveyed the different Daryns. A fine group this year from what their teachers had said. He expected an interesting show this year. Most of them were standing in the middle of the Den, looking around a bit anxious. As he counted them he found two missing. Doryan's son wasn't here yet, as well as the human. It had shocked him to learn of their friendship, what could a human hold that could interest Teneb? He remembered vaguely the young human, a scrawny little boy with black hair and fearful green eyes. He had forced to take him as his Daryn, but he had been too busy to assume his role so he had asked the teachers to take care of that matter and deal with him. He had asked them to come to him only in last resort. He had never heard of the human after that... He was thankful for that as he had had enough worries without adding this one to it. The last one was



the odd behavior of the linked dragons. They had distanced quite a lot from their riders: only talking to them when asked, shielding their minds to their partners, colder. Demenor had tried to ask why to Ultras, his own dragon, an Azurean, but the mighty creature had dismissed his questions.

He heard whispers and looked up. Two people had just entered the Den. He suppressed a small gasp of surprise at their appearance. They stopped near the other Daryns, keeping their distances with them.

Demenor couldn't help but see a difference between them and the others: they were standing straighter, and had an aura of confidence around them that the others lacked. He looked at the human. He had quite changed. Ushering these thoughts away, Demenor stood up, bringing silent over the stands. Only the soft growls of the dragons present could be heard. The Sowaroc and the Emnag were here again, much to the happiness of Demenor.

"Daryns! The first part of your training had come to an end. Now show us the skills you have mastered and bring us honor!"

A cheer rose from the stand. The Ceremony had started.

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Hogwarts:

Dumbledore, Mme Maxime, the staff of Hogwart, the member of the Order of the Phoenix, the leaders of the remaining Auror forces, the different European Ministers were seated in the meeting room of the Order. A giant screen was showing them the events taking place at Beauxbâtons. Mme Maxime was on the verge of tears as she watched her school being attacked countless times. Hagrid was squeezing her hand, offering her a support which she gladly accepted.

They had watched as Voldemort had raised the dead to launch his first attacks. But not being a full Necromancer yet, the Dark Lord couldn't maintain them for a long time. Now they were witnessing what looked like the final attack.



On cue, the last wards of the school fell, and the dark fighters rushed inside. Mme Maxime made a small cry and everyone supported grim faces.

"Olympe?"

"Yes Albus?"

"We don't have much of a choice left... Do you want to do it?"

"N-No, you do it. I can't..."

Sighing, Dumbledore went to the wall on his right and pressed a few stones. The wall disappeared and Dumbledore steeped in the hidden room, the others behind him. On a large table, stood a replica of the French school of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The Hogwarts Headmaster took of his wand and pointed it to the center of the building.

'Disembliia"

The buildings disappeared and the others could only see flows of blue light forming a small knot in the center.

'This knot is the point where several magic's flows meet. Beauxbâtons as every Magical school is built on one of them. It enables us to protect the school by drawing energy from this knot," explained Dumbledore. "For now, this knot is stable, but if destabilize, the Magic won't be able to circulate and will accumulate, leading to an implosion."

"Anc'asarn, i'oj Tala'anra, leem gerv parsam ol ter"

The power seemed to radiate from him and form a glow around the old wizard who was now showing some of the powers which were still frightening Voldemort. He pointed his wand to the flows leaving the knot and twisted them to connect them back to the knot which shook.

"Hato"



The knot stopped shuddering and started growing bigger and bigger as the flows faded slowly.

With grim determination, the old wizard put his hand on the knot and closed his eyes. A blue glow surrounded him as he closed his eyes. For the past minutes he tensed and frowned.

With fascination, the others watched as the knot became blinding white and suddenly exploded. They were blinded for a few seconds, but opened their eyes in time to see the end of the shockwave.

Dumbledore opened his eyes, breaking the contact with the knot, panting and looking exhausted.

"Done."

They went back to the meeting room and looked at the screen. Nothing remained of the school. Where had once stood the building was a huge crater.

"I think he has lost one third of his army at least," stated Moody. "The rest is unconscious."

"We could apparate and arrest them."

"No," said Dumbledore. "What I did destabilize the magic in a kilometer range. Any type of magic would go haywire."

There was a silence.

"He's likely to focus on Hogwarts now," said Mundungus Fletcher.

"Yes, I believe he will attack soon, so we have to prepare everything to protect all the people there."

They all nodded and spent the next two hours planning. An owl interrupted them.

Dumbledore opened it and read it aloud.

"Albus



Haphazard Street was destroyed and most of its inhabitants killed and tortured. I'll spare you the details. The attackers left at the arrival of a group of Phoenix. A few managed to escape injured and some were left, gravely wounded. We need help: healers, food, first-aid necessities.

Arabella Figg"

All exchanged horrified glances.

"Sirius, Moody, Mundungus, Selina, Poppy, go to Haphazard, I'll send you others as soon as I can. Minerva, Filius, Anna, Dan, go warn the students of each house. Sophie, Bruno, Gerard, you'll be in charge of the Beauxbâtons students."

The three French teachers nodded and left behind their English counterpart.

"Karl, you and Zora, are in charge of the Durmstrang ones."

They agreed and exited the room. Those who remained continued the planning after Dumbledore had called for help for those at Haphazard.

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Ron and Hermione were in the Great Hall, with all the prefects from all the schools. They had called for this meeting to try to find means to take people's mind of the war and lighten the mood a bit. So far they had agreed on a Prank War, a Ball, the possibility of meeting in a room reserved to the student, some kind of talent show.

Ron and Hermione were acting as the representative of the students in a strange kind of way and nobody contested this. One of their worry was the defiance between the different schools and houses. They had managed to refrain the Gryffondors from playing tricks on the other houses or provoked the Slytherins. All the other prefects had done so, even the Slytherin ones (Blaise Zabini and Frederik Million). It had worked quite well. The tensions had lessened but not the defiance. The only ones to refuse to submit were Malfoy and his clique of wannabe-death-eaters. But seeing that the majority of



Slytherin supported the decisions taken by the prefects. The opinion towards Slytherin had changed a bit. Most of those supporting the Dark Lord had been taken from the schools by their parents.

After the take-over of Durmstrang most of the surviving students had come to Hogwart which had been expanded for them. After hearing from the siege of Beauxbâtons, the teachers had decided to try and evacuate the French school. The solution had been found with the paintings.

Indeed they had witnessed the building of Hogwart and knew most of its secrets in which the existence of a link between the different European schools.

The castle was then searched for this link to no avail. Finally, Dumbledore decided to take off the wards of the school for a few hours to search the castle with magical means in its own magical structure. While he was looking for it, the teachers, helped by the students from fifth to seventh year had to fight off a small group of Death Eaters.

It took Dumbledore four hours to find it and set up the wards.

When the other schools had been built, the wizards of these times still knew how to create magical portals. The portal leading to Beauxbâtons was a wall in which a night sky with a flying gryphon (the ancestor of the griffin) had been carved. To be opened, it needed to be activated on both sides with the pendant each Headmaster was given when he took his function in the school.

Mme Maxime was warned by Hagrid who refused to say how, saying that it was reserved to giants and giants only.

Finally the portal was opened. Slowly the school was evacuated from all its inhabitants and valuable things. Before leaving, Mme Maxime timed the portal on her side to close an hour after her departure. It worked well.

Sadly the French school had suffered quite a lot of losses. While the research and the evacuation, The Dark army had kept on launching



attack upon attack against the school. Forty students were killed as well as three members of the staff.

The French students had settled quite easily in Hogwarts: the prefects had done everything in their power to facilitate their integration.

Hogwarts also hosted the Phoenix Order. Most of the families of the students had been hidden with Fidelius or by other means to guaranty their safety.

Classes were now completely orientated towards Defense, Dueling or dealt with fighting situations.

Hermione hadn't given up on her researches about the burglaries at the beginning of the second Rise of Voldemort. So far she hadn't found anything significant. The slip of Hagrid about the wizard who had stolen some of the same things hadn't helped a lot. But she didn't give up. She had set up a group of equally interested students and they had been researching since then. She had even gained access to the Restricted Section. Seeing the enthusiasm of the students, she, with the support of the prefects had ask Dumbledore if groups could be organized to help in war, arguing that the students were feeling useless, something which wasn't good for the morale.

The Headmaster had agreed and quickly groups had been set up depending on the interest and skills of the students. There was now a Potions' group which brewed potions, draught for the healers, but also poisons, and potions for attacks, or spying. An other worked with plants, setting up natural defenses, extracting ingredients for potions. Several were created for researches in different fields.

Moreover sessions had been created for those interested in gaining extra practice or knowledge. A new class had been opened: Physical Defense.

As the Head of Houses (Dan Jenkins, the Physical Defense teacher having taken the temporary lead of the Slytherin House) entered the hall, the prefects were leaving. The other students were in their common rooms as it was now forbidden to leave them after 10 a.m. and it was near midnight.



They escorted their prefect to their rooms. Ron, Hermione and the other Gryffindor prefects looked at McGonagall strangely. Their teacher looked quite saddened. They entered the tower and gathered everybody, despite the late hours.

"Gryffindor, it's my duty to inform you of the destruction of Beauxbâtons. We provoked the implosion of the school as a big part of You-Know-Who's forces were inside. He lost about one third of his army."

Cheer rang in the tower, quickly muffled at the grim face of their Transfiguration's teacher.

"Voldemort retaliated. He, with his inner circle went to Haphazard Street. Most of its inhabitants were tortured and killed."

Muffled cries erupted as some of the students had some relatives in Haphazard.

"I'm always ready if you want to talk," added the Professor before leaving, not knowing exactly what to do and being preoccupied by the situation.

No students slept well this night.

The next day, as soon as she could, Hermione ran to the Library and immersed herself in book, determined to find whatever she was looking for. She walked through the shelves of the Restricted section, looking at the title of the books, picking a few on her way. As she reached the end of the shelves she headed back to her usual table when a little brown book caught her eyes. She took it and placed it at the end of her pile.

Hours later she opened it, quite infuriated at her lack of results.

She dusted the cover which didn't have a title.

Opening it, she saw a faded writing.

"Diary of Wlad Gildren"



Shrugging she turned on the next pages, zooming over them. When an entry caught her eyes.

*"Today, I met Olven. I can't believe what he showed me. The power he holds is unimaginable. He persuaded me. No Light wizard I know of hold the quarter of the power he demonstrated. This proves it, the true power reside in Dark Magic and I'll become the best Dark wizard ever. Everyone will know me, not as the good, gentle Wlad, but as Grindelwald. They will fear me. I swear it."*

This was the diary of Grindelwald! Hermione was tempted to go immediately to Dumbledore, but curiosity got the better of her and she continued her lecture. As reached the final entry of the diary, her face was ashen.

She closed the book abruptly, gathered her thing and ran to Dumbledore's office.

The last entry rang to her ears.

*"I've gathered nearly all the items, I have Djaira's diary, I'll open the Gates soon. Do you believe it? I told you about this light wizard, Dumbledore. He is growing quite powerful, but once the ritual will be completed he'll be powerless. I will achieve the greatest goal of all Dark wizards: Opening the Hell Gates!"*

TBC

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Well, here it is! Hope you liked it.

Thanks again for those who reviewed. You're the best!

Naia



## Chapter Thirteen

The Daryns gathered for the first trial, the trailing test. They were all blinded. Harry heard several loud sounds near them and was roughly grabbed and pushed on something. From the movements, the flapping and the air whirling around him, he deduced he was on a dragon.

Finally, he was pushed off and only sheer luck and Arxeren's training preventing him from losing his balance and falling on the ground.

"You must come back to the Den and bring back a fox' hair."

He heard the rider take off before he could ask him a question. Rolling his eyes, Harry tried to guess his location.

"How nice of them! They couldn't have taken me further away!"

He was deep in the Ysarg, the forest that was situated a few kilometers away from the Headquarters. He knew from personal experience that it was at the limits of the area of the trial.

"Well, off to find a fox."

He walked towards the Den, looking around for traces of the little animals. He dismissed several trails, most of them which had been faked or made by other beasts.

Finally, he was what he had been searching for: a faded trace of a paw and rodent's bones. Smiling he looked carefully around and saw the trail. Careful not to make a sound, he followed it and found a hole at the base of a tree hidden between its roots. Harry approached and listened for signs of the foxes' presence. No sound, frowning, he knelt next to the hole. The scent of dead bodies hit his nose. Biting his lips, he looked around, trying to find something to dig in. A piece of tree bark caught his eyes and seconds later he was digging in the hole, enlarging it. He finally found the bodies of four young foxes about one to two months old. From their wounds, he could tell that a small carnivore had killed them. He was about to bury them, when a small yip stopped him. Pushing the bodies, he uncovered one of them, and noticed that the young animal was still breathing. He put a hand over



the gashes and dry blood. A light golden glow appeared and faded slowly, healing the fox. Fortunately they weren't too complex. Harry then resumed his walk, holding the little beast in materials he conjured. As he cast a last look at it, the small animal licked his finger, before falling in a deep slumber.

Using the sun, he headed quickly back to the headquarters. When he arrived, he saw that Teneb and four other elves were already here. The other riders were silent for a moment, a bit shocked, but resumed their talking. Harry smirked, if this silenced them for a few moments, then what would they do during the fighting trials. Some of them cheered on some of the Daryns.

Lienhor approached him, his face grim.

"Show me the hair you found. If you found one." he barked, with a smirk, as if he was expecting Harry to have fail his trial.

Returning the smirk, Harry, picked an orange hair on the cloak and handed it to the master, who now looked like he had swallowed sour lemons. Bound by his pledge as a teacher, he couldn't lie during the ceremony. The punishment was too great compared to his desire to humiliate Harry.

He nodded sharply, furious to have to confirm his success.

The young wizard walked to Teneb.

"Do you know a peaceful place?"

"Yes, why?"

"Look." He pushed the material, showing the sleeping baby fox. "The others were dead, and I didn't see the parents."

"Put him in my room, we were given one to put our things," he had an apologetic face.

"Thank you. Where it is?"

"Near Myst's stable."



Harry left, and came back a few minutes later, without his burden.

"I left him something to eat and drink in case he woke up."

"You did a good thing by taking him, he wouldn't have survived."

The dark-haired teenager shrugged.

"I couldn't let him die. Anyway, what's next?"

"Archery , I think."

"Great!" the sarcasm was audible. "At least I'll get rid of this. How did you do?"

"Third I think."

Edevia had been readying the targets as the others arrived and motioned to the Daryns to come up to him.

"Well, now is your new challenge. Hit as much targets as you can, for those who can." She said the last part looking at Harry.

Harry looked at the targets, knowing this would be his worst time.

Half an hour later, he banished his bow to his little-hideout, sighing. As it was to be expected, he had not done very good, but managed not to end last. His throwing-knives capacities were not as abysmal as his archery's. On the other hand, Teneb was quite happy, he had managed to finish in the first three places. Both of them had put illusion on them, to hide their real weapons. They had to hit the targets which stood further and further away. Passed a certain distance, they started to move faster and faster. He had seen the others' look of scorn, the smirks, heard the laughter of the Daryns and the riders, their taunts. He didn't say anything, only smiled somberly, they wouldn't know what hit them.

The targets were sent away and suddenly a trapped race appeared. Each obstacle was made by at least one element.

Lienhor looked at them.



"Call your horses, you'll have to go through this course, and you'll be timed." He pointed to a magical timer that had appeared above the circuit.

Immediately several whistle were heard and then galloping horses erupted in the arena, stopping before their rider. Myst was the last to come.

With a grin, Harry watched as Lienhor approached him, leading an old, tired- looking horse, who looked like he would have trouble trotting. "Well, since you don't have a horse, I thought this one will be adapted to your ., hum.., should I say 'particular' abilities."

The sarcasm was evident and Harry ignored the howls of the laughing spectators.

"Why, thank you, master Lienhor," the sarcasm put in the single word 'master' would have been enough to put Professor Snape to shame, "but I have my own horse."

"Really? Well in that case, show us what you'll be riding. A dog perhaps? Or a snail?"

Harry's wide smirk was his only answer as the young boy whistle sharply.

A minute later, a huge black stallion stopped near him.

Harry petted him, before jumping on his back in a fluid and graceful movement.

"I think you won't mind. After all, as you were too busy, you forgot to let me chose one."

Lienhor's jaw was on the floor as were everyone's except Teneb's who seemed quite happy too see their shock.

"B-But, t-that's Shadow!"

"Ten points to you. What about this race?"



Recovering his spirits briefly, he motioned to Arnelle to begin.

One by one, they went through the circuit, which seemed to change each time. A few didn't make it to the end, falling off their mounts or being knocked out. Others ended quite wounded.

Teneb aced it. He made out without a scratch and his stallion wasn't breathing too heavily as were the others. The training proved to be useful. Harry smiled as he got into position, barely aware that every eyes were fixed on him. Now, time to show them what a human can do.  
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As a red light sprang in the air he leaned on Shadow's neck. The stallion bolted forward the first obstacle, a fire slalom. Following his horse's movements as if he was glued on his back, Harry just had to direct him, trusting his mount's instinct. The second part was several natural obstacles, such as tree trunks, a fake rivers, holes, fences. None of them were a problem to the horse that literally flew over them. A sort of canyon then appeared: as Harry entered it, he had to dodge to his right quickly to avoid a rock. The remaining part of the crossing of the canyon was spent dodging rocks. Harry finally reached the final line, a moment later, after encounters with arrows, whirling dummies holding various weapons; from swords to hammers or chains ended by spiked balls.

He petted Shadow again, thanking and praising him, trying to hide his grin to the shocked riders. He looked at the timer, and his smile widened as he saw he had beat Opheria's time, even if she was said to be the best rider Lienhor had seen for years. It placed him in first place, Opheria second, and Teneb third.

"How did you do it human?" Lienhor's bark, brought everyone back to reality.

"That's training for you, and a good teacher." With that Harry dismounted and started to conjure water for his stallion, before checking him for injuries.

"What did you do to him, you little." Lienhor had grabbed him roughly by his collar, but couldn't finish his question as Shadow stomped heavily on his foot. He screamed, loudly and in a really girly fashion.



"Oh, sorry, I forgot to tell you, he's quite protective of me, but you knew that, didn't you?"

Lienhor was too busy hovering on his good feet while nursing his other to answer. Teneb repressed a grin, the sight was really hilarious. In the corner of his eyes, he saw Kobalt smiling slightly too.

Before the riding master could ridicule himself more than he had already, a tall Elemental, Kassim, arrived before them.

"Daryns! Those who have been gifted with the control of elements will now step forwards."

A cheer erupted from the stands. Elemental tests were the first ones of the spectacular part of the ceremonies, they marked the beginning of the fights.

Teneb was among those who had elements powers. There were, besides the three Elementals whose powers were part of the patrimony, Inir which had control over earth and Malisa which was a fire elemental, like Harry.

When Harry followed Teneb to the spot that Kassim had showed, whispers broke.

"Get back to your place human!" yelled one of the riders.

"Yes!"

Other shouts quite similar as for their contents followed.

Harry was growing angrier by the minute and he saw Teneb glanced worriedly at him. Fire gifted people tended to have volatile tempers.

Finally, Kassim threw the last straw.

"The show you played a minute before don't allow you to come here. Weakling aren't allowed there and a low-breed human like you least of all."



This did it. Even Harry had his limits, and they had been trespassed too often.

He started to feel his fire energy getting out of control. Trying to regain control of the energy, even if he knew it was useless, he looked wildly around him to find a target which wouldn't mind being reduced to ashes, something he was tempted to do to the elf before him.

He saw a pile wood, a remaining of the riding circuit.

Focusing on it, trying to ignore the burning feeling in his body, he directed the energy to the pile which exploded in a huge flame.

Breathing deeply to calm himself, he used the tricks Arxeren had given him, in case something like this happened. He turned his blazing green eyes to Kassim.

"Take back what you said." The words were barely whispered, but the power behind the words made the rider take a step backwards.

'I-I."

Huffing and shaking his head Harry dismissed him and joined Teneb, not aware of the silence which had fell upon the Den. A fly could be heard. The elves were starring in shock at Harry, as he had grown a second head. Nobody uttered a word as the Daryns started their next trial: they would summon elemental beasts that would fight against each other.

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Demenor starred stunned at the youth standing near Doryan's son. The boy was a fire gifted. Why hadn't he been told so? Elemental gifted riders were registered, in particular fire ones, due to the influence the element had other them.

"Jeelesa, why didn't you tell me that he was gifted?" he had tried to sound calm, but a bit of worry had pierced through his voice, if the human hadn't been properly trained, he was a walking bomb, which could be triggered anytime.



"We didn't know about him." the same worry was perceptible in her voice.

Worried, Demenor looked back to the raven-haired teenager. He had been surprised as everyone had been to see him come in the Den in sixth position of the trailing trial. But he had quickly dismissed it as a fluke, seeing his feeble score at archery. Sure he wasn't the worst, but he sure had proved humans had no place there. Then there had been Shadow. Demenor and most of the riders had given up on seeing the great stallion allow someone to ride him. It had been a shame since Shadow was the result a long breeding process. Demenor looked around, seeing his own shock mirrored on everyone's faces. He frowned, how could nobody have known of the human's abilities. Sure Effilin and the others must have known and trained him. Yes, they must have wanted not to bother him, that was it. Demenor had faith in all of them, they had to be good teachers to have managed to shape the scrawny human boy into this strong teenager. But then, why were they so surprised by this? The astonished look on their face confused the leader of the Dragonmasters. The awed whispers filling the stands brought him back to the ceremony. The Daryns had started their summons.

Despite the fact that the Elementals had learned to control their powers since their birth, they would fight with the others, even if they had a huge advantage on them. Ribor stepped forwards and raised his hands, something seemed to come from the ground and slowly a huge Erumpent appeared, made of rock, vines, wood. He was bigger than a real one and looked quite stronger.

I was then Chrisianne turned and after much arm waiving, a small tornado formed, shifting to the form of a Giant Eagle. Kobalt chose the form of a Runespoor. His technique wasn't as spectacular as the one of the others ; showing off wasn't really his cup of tea.

Then it was the turn of the gifted.

Inir, had chosen the form of an hydra. He put his palms toward the grounds and vines started to grow, forming a high pillar. They then seemed to melt, the only remainder of their presence was the leaves which were adorning the body of the creature. Malisa had opted for a



huge Golden griffin which formed in a great flame. It was then Teneb's and Harry's turn.

They had decided to summon their creatures together.

Harry clasped his hands, then parted them a bit revealing a small reddish ball, the size of his fist. The ball grew bigger and changed of color slightly, gaining scarlet, golden shades. The golden shades were accompanied with bronze ones that were flaring. With a gentle push, it rose in the air. Teneb raised his hand and a swirl of wind touched. It lighted immediately and swirls of fire started to crisscross the sky, spiraling, drawing complex patterns. A trail of sparks remained after its passages. The swirls converged towards the ball and merged with it, a white silvery aura surrounding the orb. The sparks had formed a cloudy shape in the sky, the orb rose into the air as the sparks seemed to die out. Then an explosion occurred. It was soundless. A red wave tinted with golden and silver. (A/N: for those who saw the Fellowship of the ring, it's kinda like the fireworks Gandalf threw at Bilbo's anniversary, the one which formed a white circle in the sky before falling back over the lake. I think it's just before Merry and Pippin stole the big dragon firework.) As the wave spread, a figure appeared in the sky, little lines of fire connecting dots that had been sparks, outlining the figures of a mighty reptile. During that time the red wave condensed, and formed an arrow which was currently speeding through the sky. The arrow started to grow wings, legs, a tail and a reptilian head. Gasps erupted in the stands as two dragons soared above the Den. Then the one which had been formed from the wave flew to the one made of dots and breathed fire at him. The fire he was made of. It hit the dot-figure of the other dragon which seemed to be engulfed in a giant flame. Finally the two mighty beasts flew back to the ground and settled near Teneb and Harry: two dragons: one made of pure fire, the other of air.

Demenor, as well as all the riders starred at the summons of the two youths. How on earth could they have summoned these?

They watched in wonder as the first fights took place between the different summoned animals. True to be told, they didn't really pay attention to the others, they were starring at the two regal reptiles.



Harry fought first against Ribor. He knew why they had put him against him. If fought well, a duel between fire and earth would be won by earth.

The fight didn't last for long. Despite the fact that Harry had been opposed to a full-fledged Elemental, his dragon smashed the Erumpent.

Demenor couldn't help but being awed by the strategy the human developed. What Ribor had overlooked when choosing the animal for his summoning was that an Erumpent had a weak point: between his neck and head, there was a small jointure of tender flesh. Here, the flesh was replaced by wood. More over, the size of the creature restrained his agility. The fire dragon had just to dive to the Earth summon, being careful to avoid the horn, and strike at this point.

Seconds later, the Erumpent had disappeared.

Teneb's fight against Malisa lasted a bit more, but in the end, Teneb defeated her. Inir had won against Chrisianne.

Remained in the fight: Inir, Teneb, Harry and Kobalt.

Kassim stepped forwards, careful to put quite a distance between him and Harry, even if two people of the same element weren't supposed to battle. If they did, their element would generally go back to them and hit them, except if the user was powerful enough to block the backfire and direct it away. Harry raised an eyebrow at him clearly amused by his reaction.

"N-Now, it will be Inir against Malisa and Teneb against the human."

Harry was about to tell him that he had a name, he decided to let it slide. He would be out of here in about three days to never return. It didn't matter if they didn't know his name. But he wouldn't answer to their orders. After all, why should he? He wasn't being addressed to, was he? As far as he knew his name wasn't 'Human'.

He shook Teneb's hand, something he hadn't done with Ribor.

"May the best one win."



"Yes, usual restrictions."

"As usual."

They approached their creatures, and to everyone's shock climbed on them.

Immediately Kassim rushed to their side, stuttering.

"You can't mount them, it's impossible. and against the rules."

"The Ten rules of the Dragons only say that during the ceremony, any way of fighting is allowed, as long as it doesn't threaten the lives of the opponent or any other living creatures involved in the battle. There is nothing which forbids someone from climbing on his summon," recited Teneb

"B-But how?!"

Ignoring him, the two Daryns shot in the air and came face to face. They had often fought like this. Air wasn't very useful against fire because it only fueled its power. On the other hand, Teneb could easily direct an attack of fire off target. They had resorted to these methods when fighting with their elements' powers.

Grinning, Harry raised his arm and dropped it, signaling the start of the fight.

To the spectators who were staring at them, open-mouthed, it looked more like a show than a fight, they looked like they were enjoying this a lot. They were executing a series of acrobatics, barely avoiding collisions a few times. A gasp escaped their lips as Harry dove, followed immediately by Teneb.

It's like Quidditch, it's like Quidditch, it's like Quidditch, It's like. NOW!

Harry leaned on the right side of his fire dragon who made a barrel roll before springing in the air. At the time, Harry had sent an attack behind him. The air moved by their dive would conduct it, creating a column of fire from which Teneb wouldn't be able to escape. But Harry didn't loosen his concentration and stayed alert, something



which allowed him to barely escape a series of air blades thrown from his left side. "Well done!"

"Yours was good too," answered Teneb.

"Thanks. Are you finished with your warm-up?"

"Ready when you are."

"Let's go then."

They rose in the air, like two arrows.

The fight grew more heated, they exchanged blows after blows. Teneb's dragon created a huge tornado, summoned a thick fog, hiding himself behind.

It was so thick was it also muffled the sounds.

Opening his mind, heightening his senses, waiting for the smallest clues of Teneb's presence. He knew that if he tried to escape from the fog, it would follow him, thickening around him to the point where he would have difficulty to breath. He smirked, he was certain Teneb would use the move and he had thought of a counterattack. Gathering his powers, he used them to web a sort of protection around him, like a second skin. His smirk deepened: he really hoped that Teneb had thought of erecting a shield around him. It was going to hurt.

Putting his hand on his element animal's head he gave his order. Taking a deep breath, he braced himself as the dragon opened his mouth and let huge tongues of fire free. Immediately, the air around them lit up. Normally a real fog, as it was composed of water couldn't have conduct fire, but Teneb had made it so that any tentative of Harry to use fire when in this fog will end with the young wizard in the middle of a cloud of his own fire.

Harry willed the fire around him to support him, as he sensed his dragon fusion with the flames around them. He smiled, this would increase the power of his creature!



As he concentrated to force the wild element to resume his reptilian form, he forgot to watch his back, it proved to be fatal mistake.

He didn't have the time to react when a swirling wind took him and threw him in the air. He was about two hundred meters high and was falling straight to the ground, without parachute. Forcing himself to calm down something that was proving to be difficult since he was seeing the ground getting closer and closer, he called for his creature. He was eighty meters high, sixty, fifty, forty, thirty. He closed his eyes, picturing what would remain of him, a smashed Harry. not a very pretty picture mind you.

Suddenly his eyes flew opened as he sensed his dragons just above him. Ten meters before he hit the ground he found himself safe on the back of the fire dragon who swept above the grass, leaving a burned trail behind him.

"This is war." he muttered. He looked at Teneb's dragon. He knew from past experience that the creature wouldn't catch on fire, he could also see that Teneb had suffered a bit from his move, and he was healing his burns, but. Yes!

He approached his opponent and waited for the right opening.

Finally it came: Teneb dove at him, making his dragon breathed a stormy wind. This was what Harry was waiting for. He pulled all the power of his creature into the blast of flame it breathed. The two attacks connected. As Harry expected, the air didn't conduct the fire, as Teneb must have shielded it, but it fitted his plan. For once it looked like a stalemate but slowly, fire took over air.

It then went very fast, the blast of fire reached the air dragon's mouth and was happed. Teneb had barely the time to register it before being thrown away as his creature imploded under him. Hadn't Teneb been falling, he would have sighed in frustration. But first he had to stop himself from becoming a pancake à la Teneb.

Focusing on the air around him, he slowed down his fall. He heard a swoop near him and felt someone grab him.



"What's the score now?" He knew he wouldn't like the answer but what curious.

"Twelve to two for me."

"I'm still sure you're cheating."

"My dear Teneb, it's called skills."

Teneb was surprised by the humor in Harry's tone. The teenager rarely let his mask fall and let his enjoyment show. He had never seen him that cheerful before. Deciding not to dwell on this he shook Harry's hand again.

"Oh! And thank you for catching me."

"You're welcome."

By this time they were finished they were back to the grounds and have jumped down.

Stunned by this display, Kassim motioned wordlessly and in a daze to Inir and Kobalt to fight. But if a rider had been asked what had happened during their fight they would have been unable to answer them. Their mind were still trying to accept the fact that a human had been powerful enough to summon an element animal and even ride it. In the end, Kobalt won.

The fight opposing Harry to Kobalt didn't last long. While the water hydra had the upper hand, Harry's dragon managed to breath a fire so hot that the water vaporized.

By then, the spectators had recovered and were talking in hushed whispers between them. Demenor was starring at the dark-haired teenager. Why wasn't he warned! As ludicrous as it seems, he held power, he could be useful. He was going to have a talk with the masters.

He looked at the Daryns which were being harangued by Effilin and Sarwin for the last and most spectacular trial of this ceremony: the



Duels. Everything was allowed, the only two things forbidden were the use of lethal or elemental attacks.

The Daryns were given ten minutes to warm up. Everyone saw the air around Teneb and Harry shimmered and then disappear.

Immediately conversations broke out loud. Most of the riders were trying to get to one of the teachers, asking him what had just happened. Demenor didn't take part to these conversations. He was an air element too, he could sense that the two youths were still there, just hidden. Leaning back in his seat, he crossed his arms and waited for the rest of the ceremony.

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The Daryns were warming up, well some were just twirling their weapons and chatting, others were stretching themselves before working on their weapons' manipulations.

Meanwhile, Harry and Teneb were practicing too. They were executing their sword dance, over and over, accelerating slowly to the point where you could nearly see an invisible opponent, before slowing down.

"Ready to shock them to death?"

"Didn't we already do that?" Teneb was quite amused by Harry's cheerful mood, he guessed that the perspective of taking his revenge was the cause of this sudden burst of cheerfulness. He smiled

"Let's go"

Waving his hand over his weapons, he took off the disguising spell, letting their true nature in the open. Then he dismissed the curtain of air he had drawn around them, shielding them from prying eyes.

They walked to the others and waited for the name of their opponent.

Effilin smirked at them, as was Sarwin, apparently they were proud of what they had come up with. The duels would take place as followed:



Xjahl vs. Inir

Vlad vs. Malisa

Kobalt vs. Chrisianne

Teneb vs. Ribor

Opheria vs. Arnelle

Garth vs. Harry

The first round would be only Physical combat; the second would only allow the use of Magic. The last round would consist of both magic and physical combat.

Harry had to repress a smirk, he knew fully well why he had been opposed to Garth first, The young Magi was a very good fighter and nothing else positive could be said about him. Effilin wanted him humiliated, Harry knew that. He knew also that someone would fall in the depths of humiliation once this was over, but it wouldn't be the one everyone thought he would be.

The first fights went well, Teneb hold back, not wanting to show off his abilities yet. He was saving it for later. Inir, Malisa, Kobalt, Teneb and Opheria were the winners. As Harry and Garth stepped in position everyone turned to look at them. Normally, nobody would have paid attention to a fight with the human, but after what they had seen a few minutes earlier, they were wondering what was going to happen now.

Harry raised his sword that twinkled in the afternoon light. Effilin frowned as he looked at him. His stance was perfect, his balance too. And his sword would make any fighter go green with envy. There was something definitively wrong with that weakling.

At his signal, Garth lunged at Harry, fending himself and throwing a small blade. Effortlessly, Harry stepped aside and lazily deflected the blade with his sword.



"Surely you can do better than that?" Harry was looking down on the Magis.

The other gritted his teeth and launched a series of attacks, backed by some kicks. Harry dodged some of them, parried some of the blows, returned others, the whole thing in a gracious way which made it seem easy.

"Come on! I'm sure you can do better!" Harry had barely the time to block his opponent's sword which came right to his head, as he did so, he registered a movement of air on his right. Letting himself fall on the ground, he barely avoided the darts the other had sent.

If he wanted to play that way, then Harry would show him what a master could do at this game. He took a few steps backwards, checking his hidden weapons and examining his opponent. The Daryn had a dagger at his side, and from the bulge Harry could see, a knife on each forearm. The spiked rings and bracelets must hold darts. Having taken that into account, He prepared his actions.

"So human, afraid? Running from me won't make you win this. you coward."

Harry refused to bite the bait and timed his move.

"Then why can't you catch me? Am I too fast for you?" He could see his taunts were angering the other. "Or are you too slow to keep up?"

Harry wanted to smile as he saw Garth attack him. So easy to trigger.

Holding his sword in his right hand, he blocked the slash of the other's weapon. Taking a dart of his belt he threw it, hitting the other on the neck. Time for a bit of fun. The dart held a hallucinogenic substance which would activate in three., two., one second. Garth stumbled and fell on his back. He scrambled back to his feet and looked wildly around before running to his right, straight into a tree, for the following three minutes, he ran around, twirling his sword madly, striking at invisible enemies, falling quite a few times, most of the time with a little help from Harry. Finally it wore off, leaving a sore Garth standing disorientated. Blinded by anger, Garth rushed at him. Harry side stepped to his right, extending his leg and successfully



tripping the other boy while slashing with his knife, cutting the other's belt that had been the only thing holding his pants. The Magis, standing only in his underwear, had now reached a strange shade of purple, mixed with a deep red color. He launched an attack, after extirpating himself from his pants: he couldn't use magic to repair them and would have to finish the fight in his underwear. He was making furious moves, while drawing his dagger and readying to struck Harry in his back. But Harry had seen it and if there was one thing he despised, it was this. Doing a summersault over Garth, he took out his dagger and struck the boy behind his head as he ended his jump. Falling on his face, Garth managed to roll and by some miracle came back to his feet, whirling on his heels, he tried to face Harry, but the young teenager had been too fast and was already on his right side, delivering a mighty kick in his face. The youth, unbalanced and surprised by the strength behind the blow staggered but managed to stay on his feet and struck at Harry. During the following minute, the spectators could only see a metallic blur as Harry forced Garth to step back. Finally with a large slash and quick twirl of his dagger, he caught the other's sword and hit his adversary. Seconds later, a clang echoed thorough the arena.

Garth was lying on the grounds, a cut on his left cheek, his sword meters away and Harry's sword pointed at his throat.

"Do you give up?"

Remaining mute, Garth withered under Harry's sword, trying to take out his other dagger.

"If you're looking for this, I took the liberty to free you from its weight," said Harry, with a smirk which would have mad Snape's proud.

White, Garth looked up at the young human who was currently holding his two knives and his dagger in his right hand.

"And forget about using your darts, you would regret it."

Garth kept on struggling. Growing fed up with him; Harry increased the pressure on his throat.

"Do. You. Give. Up?"



Shaking his head slowly, Garth kept his eyes fixed on Harry. The young teenager was a bit taken aback by the amount of hate he saw in these eyes, after all what he had done to the Magis wasn't the tenth of what he had to endure.

He sheathed his sword and without a word threw the other's weapons at him before walking back to Teneb, without a last glance at his opponent.

Effilin was now a lovely shade of scarlet. Really he should take some anger management lessons. But Sarwin hadn't lost his smug appearance

"Good fight Harry."

"You too. Revenge is really a dish best served cold. Did you take pictures?"

"Of course, but can I ask you something?"

"Yes?"

"Could you give me some duplicates?"

This sent the two youths in a fit of laughter.

"Sure."

At this moment, Sarwin approached. "The victors will now battle, only Magic is allowed in these duels," he then announced the duels.  
Inir vs Vlad

Koblat vs Teneb

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |    |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Opheria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | vs | Harry |
| The fights of Inir and Teneb were quick. Inir, though not an expert fighter was a master when it came to Magic and usually preferred this way of fighting. Vlad had no chance. Neither had Kobalt. In a matter of five minutes, the young Elemental was bound and gagged, thus forced to with draw from the fight. |    |       |



It was then time for Harry and Opheria to battle.

Seeing the apprehensive look on the Magis' face, Harry decided to end this quickly, after all, Opheria was one of the few that hadn't let Teneb completely down.

At Sarwin's signal, he fired a strong disarming charm but was nearly caught of guard when it rebounded on Opheria's shield and flew straight back to him.

She had erected the Scale shield. It prevented any charm, besides the Unforgivables to enter, but also to exit. While in the shield, Opheria couldn't do anything to him and he couldn't do anything to her either.

This would be a little challenge, he had to make her to drop her shield, there was no other way, well, no other legal way. Circling around, her he tested her defenses, only to have his spells thrown back at him. He knew she was waiting for him to tire before taking him down. She had to have a monitoring device on her.

Scanning her, he found what he was looking for, a small reflect on her right eye. She had magical contacts. Harry was grateful to have hidden his true magical level. Arxeren had told him how to modified his aura. His was too noticeable both from its strength and appearance. It was white, with rainbow colored streaks as well as metallic ones: golden, silver, copper, bronze, platinum. His guardian wouldn't tell him why though.

He had chosen to expose a forest green aura that meant he was of average level. Slowly, little by little, he made his aura fade to a light gray as he threw curses after curses at her shield. They were quite spectacular, but not powerful or draining, and were normally use for shows... He could see her grin as she saw his aura dulling. She was falling for this, as were most of the riders: many had started to cheer her on, obviously equipped with the same device as she was. Deciding to carry his act to the end, he started to pant. In the corner of his eye, he could see that Sarwin's grin had faltered. So the teacher had sensed what he was doing and seen through his charade. He allowed himself to smirk at the older elf, and was rewarded with a glare. He bowed his head a little in a mock salute before manipulating



his aura one last time, bringing it to a dark gray color that normally showed exhaustion. The cheers got louder and as he thought, Ophelia dropped her shield. From there, the things went quickly. Harry let his aura flared to a red level which was associated with a quite powerful being. Ophelia gaped at him and tried to put her shield up but it was too late, soon she was knocked out, lying flat on the floor, surprise still etched on her features.

Silence followed. Harry didn't mind, he revived the young Magis with a wave of his right hand and walked back to Teneb.

"Arxeren taught you aura's manipulation?"

"Yes."

"Kaelia showed me too. How long have you been studying it?"

"Four months."

"That explains why you were able to pull this off. What about the next fight? It'll be us and Inir."

"Exactly, Do you think we could make this a bit quicker. I want to get out of here as soon as I can, I have a few plans in mind for a few 'friends of mine'." Teneb looked at him curiously, but dismissed this. He knew that most of the inhabitants of the Headquarters would regret their attitude towards Harry once they'd faced his wrath.

"No problem. One last thing, once this fight begins, no mercy."

"No mercy."

They clasped their arm, their marks of blood brother face to face a small smile on their lips, acceptance filling both of their minds.

"Ilan ory sianter"

"Ilan ory saroll"

"Desen hela athia"

"Lith tarx jomi" (1)



They then headed towards Sarwin and Inir.

The three of them were going to have to fight three clones made from Sarwin and Effilin, together. The two masters had poured all their knowledge in those clones and the one who stood up the longest against them would win. The three clones were supposed to be of equal level, but Harry wouldn't put it past the two masters to tamper one a little bit, making his slightly stronger than the others. They could always pretend that it was an accident. Oh well, maybe his training against his dummies would pay off.

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Those sneaking sons of a.! Harry was going through all the curses and insults he knew as his thoughts were turned to the ones responsible of his current predicament.

He dodged another curse from the clone on his left. It was the toughest fight he had ever done before. He heard the pants of the other two.

The three Daryns were nearly back-to-back, circled by the clones.

"Teneb," Harry's voice was strained, as he deflected more curses and parried a blow to his chest. "We need to work together or we're dead."

As a barrage of curses flew their way, Harry sighed and erected a strong shield, not the Scale one, which was draining, but a Bouncing shield.

"It won't hold for long, we have to think of something to do or they'll take us down one by one."

"Speak for yourself, human." Inir was looking weirdly at Harry. The young wizard could tell he was torn between several feelings, but finally his upbringing won.

"I don't need your help." With that he stepped out of the shield. Before Teneb could react, and as Harry wasn't about to come to his aid now. He might not have been as bad as Garth and his little gang,



but he wasn't Harry's favorite person either, he was knocked out by a well aimed clone's sword's blow.

Harry sighed, muttering about 'bloody elf who were to stuck up to accept help when it was offered to them'.

"Well, Teneb, it's us against the three big meanies there. Any ideas?"

"The usual?"

"We'll need something more. definitive to get rid of them."

"In this case, I think that the Swords' dance will be appropriate."

"Indeed."

"Will you do the honors?"

"After you my dear," said Harry with a mock bow. "You go first. I'll put the shield down in three seconds, two, one. Go."

The shield dropped, and hell broke loose.

The Sword dance was an old form of fighting, created by a tribe ages ago. This tribe, known as the Sayarins, who were seen as the masters of swords. They had their own style of fight that they kept exclusively to themselves, and when their tribe disappeared in an eruption, the style was lost. What wasn't known was that a few of them were recruited as Dragonmasters, prejudices were not strong at that time; one them was even leader of the riders. Their guardians were able to gain the knowledge of their way of fighting and kept it. Arxeren had watched over one of them, a young man who was killed in battle and he had given Harry the knowledge, agreeing to let Teneb learn it too. What the riders saw then was a sight which hadn't been seen for decades. They weren't able to use it completely, but in two months they had managed to grasp the basics, and in Harry's case reach an average level. A thing which was quite an accomplishment already.

As the shield was banished, they stood back to back, their sword raised before them the stone, embedded in the handle was shining



with magic as they started to pour power in it. They had a faint glow as both of them reached their full capacity (something which took only a few seconds). When using the Sword dance, the blades were their only weapons. Sayarins thought the sword to be the noblest form of fighting and had brought it to the form of an art. Magical duel was looked down, so that had created weapons that could channel magic, something only dwarves were still able to do. For the few seconds it took them to pour their energy in the swords, everything stood still, Inir had been carried away, the riders were all looking at the two young Daryns.

"When you want Teneb."

"Let's go."

With a quick circular motion of his sword, the young elf sent an energy blast to the closest clone which was blown backward. Then the Dance started.

The rider's mouths opened slightly more each time they struck or moved. Their movements were perfectly coordinated, each of their blows was backed up by powerful spells. The clones stepped backwards.

Harry had fell into automatism: Slash, spun, fend and strike, withdraw, parry, slash again, jump, roll. glancing at Teneb, he nodded and the elf ran to him, followed by the clone he had been fighting. As he was near Harry he lifted his feet and put it on the cupped hand of Harry who thrown him in the air, over the clone who had been about to hit Teneb in the back. As he flew over the clone, Teneb delivered a strong kick with his leg, sending him on the grounds, unconscious. Meanwhile, the clone Teneb had knocked out was up again. Harry sent a petrifying spell towards the one they had just stunned before turning to the one who had managed to escape them for now. He was mainly using his magic, Harry had barely saw him using his sword or his daggers beside when he had to defend himself.

"Caldeo" Harry muttered, only to have it came straight back to him, freezing the spot of grass where he had stood minutes before.



He approached the clone, sensing Teneb fighting with the other one behind him. Because the clone didn't attack, he taking a few step backwards, he muttered a few chosen words: "Melior maximus revelus". A red shield appeared around the clone.

"The Klenian dome"

Harry sheathed his sword. This dome was an advanced version of the scale shield. In general it was used to give the caster a large space and allowed him to ready for an attack. It could only broken if it was a black, gray, brown, blue, green, or yellow color. If it was an orange, red, purple, metallic colored or white dome, it means that the caster had poured enough power in his dome to make it unbreakable. No curse could enter but some could exit: only very powerful spells could: the caster had to bend his dome to allow the spell to exit. It demand a great deal of concentration and skills. Holding his hands before him, he started to chant, drawing complex pattern in front of him as if he was weaving a tapestry. Sarwin who was at that moment the only one watching him, the others being enthralled into Teneb's fight, recognize a pentacle as well as a few runes standing for power, nature, seeking, magic. Soon the movements of Harry's hands accelerated and his fingers started to glow faintly, threads of light leaving the tip to weave themselves before shrinking. Still chanting, Harry watched at the ball of pure light in his cupped right hand. Glancing at the clone, still protected under his dome. He had been gathering the energy around him. Harry had felt his close surroundings being drained from their energy, and he could sense him setting up several traps, not bothering to hide the manipulated flows like Harry. Too bad for him, with a sharp motion of his hand, he threw the ball above the clone.

"Adessa" (2)

Suddenly the ball seemed to explode in tiny threads of light which formed a huge snare which covered the whole dome. As soon as it tough the dome it started to glow a reddish golden light and the dome started to weakened and diminished in size. The threads seemed to be eating the dome.



The clone was panicking, and wasn't able to concentrate enough to banish his dome. Moreover, all the energy he had accumulated needed to be released or there would be too much pressure and would explode.

Soon, the dome was reduced to the size of a large shield, and Harry could see burns appearing on the clone. Not wanting to kill him he approached and summoned one of the thread to his hand, absorbing some of the energy. The power was wild and raw, and Harry struggled to gain control of it. Inside the weakened dome, the clone had blacked out, apparently the pressure had been too much.

"Odal" (3)

The threads faded and the dome, now rid of it flickered for a few minutes, but as its caster was now unconscious, it disappeared too.

Casting a freezing and muting charm on the clone, Harry ran to Teneb who had troubles with the last of the clone. Falling once again in a series of movements, created by the Sayarins, the two youths stood side by side, attacking relentlessly the clone. But Harry soon noticed that Teneb was showing signs of exhaustion. Motioning for him to step aside, Harry poured more magic in his weapon and launched himself in the attack, aiming a blow to the chest of the clone, he accompanied his blow with a swift kick while turning quickly. A red gash marred now the uncovered torso of the clone. He raised his sword and struck down, clenching his sword with the other's. The situation seemed to have come to a dead end, both swords were locked together, and none of the opponents seemed to be about to give up. Suddenly Harry released his grip a little, surprising the other who had been leaning on his sword. The sudden lost of resistance caused him to stumble and he wasn't able to react as Harry twirled his sword, taking his out of his hands. The sword landed two meters away, but before he could bent down to pick it up, a blade came to his throat, daring him to move. The clone looked up to Harry who was at the other end of the handle, his steady and cold green eyes piercing through him.

"Do you surrender?" Harry's voice was cold and expressionless.

The clone nodded and disappeared instantly as did the two others.



Silence was filling the arena. Nobody dared to utter a sound. Harry walked calmly to Teneb and extended his arm to the young elf who had sat on the grounds while waiting for the end of his fight.

Clasping their forearms, they locked their eyes, they renewed their pact of Blood Brothers again. Harry gave his friend a little energy boost before releasing his arm.

They sheathed their weapons after casting a few cleaning charms as well as a dwarf spell Terio had taught them, to sharpen the blade and protect it.

Together they then, turned to the stands, waiting, side by side.

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(1) "United by minds United by souls Death or Life Linked through all"

(2) Activate

(3) Vanish

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I hope you like this chapter. Once again thanks to all who reviewed. There will be a little more elf-bashing in one of the following chapters.

Bye

Naia



## Chapter Fourteen

Silence.

Dead-silence. No one was daring to speak. The display of power they had just witnessed was extraordinary...this win had assured both of them the title of Athar. Added to their rider's name, it means that they had been the best of their group. They would have to choose their name during the second part of the ceremony that would take place the next day.

They both bowed to the statues on the fields in the ancient manner. Then Harry looked at Teneb and concentrated.

*Can we get out there?* Harry's mental tone was eager.

*Gladly. The cliff?*

Yes Teneb didn't miss the rush of the voice.

*Let's go*

Taking their weapons, they headed towards their horses, who had stayed around, jumped on their backs and left, without a word, followed by every eye. Nobody stopped them or tried to.

Demenor starred at the place where they had been. How? How was this possible? He recalled everything he knew about the human. What was his name...Harvey or something like this...He remembered black hair, tanned skin, a boy quite short and scrawny, with green eyes. Yes the eyes, he could picture them distinctively. Their color was unusual. The boy was confused when he had seen him for the first and last time. Lost too, and hurt or humiliated, he didn't really remember. He looked around, only to see shocked faces, like his own, probably. The thing that was still puzzling him was the obvious surprise of the masters. Effilin and Sarwin's faces were almost comical. Their faces were gray, and now becoming slowly a lovely red shade, their eyes were bulging out of their eyes sockets, their mouth wide opened. Demenor would have laughed if the situation hadn't been so serious. From everything he could see, he had a loose fire elemental a powerful fighting genius there, with no attach or



loyalties towards the institution. Teneb was another story. When he had heard the son of Doryan had befriended the human, he had been about to have a serious talk with him, but an event at Horevald had prevented him from doing so and later it had been too late. So to sum up everything, he had the two most powerful and promising students he had never seen, but had lost their loyalty. It was obvious that the human only held spite and wariness for them and that Teneb was disillusioned when it came to his race and the riders. It was a real shame, to know that they might have lost or damage two amazing potentials. But why wasn't he warned? He would have taken some measures, some private tutors, apprenticeship with the Royal elite guards, even for the human. He could be a useful weapon and with the proper training and action he would have been attached to the Headquarters, loyal to his death to the riders. What had the teachers told him about both of them? Demenor tried to recall the reports he had received. His memory was really bad he knew this. He could remember some people for a really long time but not facts.

Sighing he stood up and broke the silence.

"This closes the competition. Daryns, you have proved today to be worthy of the Dragons and have brought pride to your mentors. It's also my duty to give the Athar to the ones who proved to possess the best skills. But since those who earned them have already left, they will receive them later. Daryns, you're now on the road towards independence. At the end of this ceremony you'll be bonded rider. Always keep what you have learnt here in your minds and honor the Dragons!"

His speech was lame but he couldn't do better. He had prepared a good one, but it was now inappropriate after the display of power they had seen. Anyway, it seemed to have brought everyone out of their trance. He noticed from the corners of his eyes, the contorted scarlet or green faces of some Daryns but dismissed it as disappointment.

Demenor left quickly for his office and dug in one of his drawers where he kept the files of each student and the weekly reports of every teacher. He found the one he had been looking for at the bottom of the pile. Harry was written on top.



"So that's his name." Demenor mumbled.

He skipped through it and became more and more puzzled as he read the comments of the masters.

*Useless*

*Have no real powers, has to use a wand to perform magic*

*Weak, nearly hopeless*

*Unworthy of any kind of training*

*Unable to enter the simple trance*

*Too dumb to follow any type of lessons*

*Hopeless.*

*Seems unable to achieve the simplest task.*

Those were the most common for the first nine weeks. After they weren't any, just blank pages.

What did this mean? Once this was over, he was going to have a talk with the masters. There must have been a mistake. And if there had been one, he was to blame as well as them.

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Harry and Teneb galloped calmly to the cliff. Once there, they took care of their horses, cleaning them thoroughly, before feeding them and offering them some carrots and apples knowing how much they loved it. They sat in the grass and watched the sun disappeared in the sea, admiring the amazing colors adorning the sky and the patterns drawn by the clouds. They laid on their back, side by side, enjoying the silence.

"We shocked them, didn't you?"

"Definitively," answered Teneb, an amused tone in voice.



Looking at each other, the two boys, managed to restrain themselves for ten seconds before bursting in laughter.

"D-Di-Did you s-see their fa-faces?" stuttered Teneb.

"Priceless!"

"It's a shame we didn't have a camera!" added the young elf, wistfully.

Harry gave him a side-glance.

"Who said I didn't?"

"You...!" Teneb couldn't hold himself any longer. His laugh echoed in the chilly air.

With a Cheshire grin, Harry pointed to a little stud in his eyebrow. This piercing had been puzzling Teneb for days, well to be precise for five days, which was when Harry had put it. He heard him mutter a few words and the stud fell in his hand. A few words and charm later and the two youth were laughing at the 3D pictures Harry had took.

Two hours later, they were still laughing as they looked at the last one, showing Effilin when they had beat the clones.

"I haven't laughed that much for a long time." Teneb had difficulties to catch his breath.

"Me neither. I didn't think it was possible to show that many colors"

"Yes, my favorite was this shade of red, you know, the one between tomato red and magenta, with the little white dots.

"Mine was green with pink stains."

"This one was grand, I have to admit this."

Silence fell again on them, but they were comfortable, they had often shared this kind of silent.

*Teneb?*



Yes?

They had mastered mental speech and enjoyed using it. It was quite funny: Generally they used it during lessons, making quite inappropriate commentaries on teachers, caricaturing them, miming their attitude, the whole thing mentally.

*What's going to happen now?*

*I don't know Harry, I really don't know.*

*That's helpful...*

*Did you have other dreams?*

Harry sighed and stretched.

"Every night." his whisper was barely heard.

*Sorry...*

*Don't be, it's not your fault. But I swear, once I'm out of here, dragons or not, I'll kick his ass to the seventh hell. I'll make him pay!*

Through their link, Teneb could sense the cold rage behind these thoughts. It scared him a bit, such repressed negative emotions, this thirst for revenge. Elves weren't used to this sort of feeling. But Teneb knew one thing, he would help Harry. He had seen what this...this monster had done and his mind was set. This Voldemort didn't deserve to live.

"Harry, did you try to shield your mind?"

"Yes, it doesn't work. The scar is a link. When Voldemort's curse rebounded, it mixed with my magic, intertwining itself with it. It's part of me, and it explains some of my abilities like the parseltongue. To cut myself from the dream, I'd have to disable the link, thus rendering the Dark magic I received years ago inactive. But to do that, I'd have to give up every part in contact with it which represents half of my magic. My powers will be divided in two and it would bring my chance to defeat him to nil."



"Sleeping draughts? Charms?"

"The potions are addictive if taken too regularly, and for the charms, I developed a resistance to them after some time."

Teneb frowned a bit. He knew the nightmares were slowly mining his friend.

"Did you try this: create a sort of channel for the visions? If I understand it correctly, the visions are coming from Voldemort: he unconsciously sends them to you. So they must be conveyed through some sort of energy. Energy can be channeled."

"So," continued Harry, "all I'd have to do is locate the link's contact's point..." He looked up at his friend. "It could work!"

"We could do this now."

"Well, if you feel up to it, see you in the plain."

Seconds later they meet in the plain.

Arxeren and Kaelia aren't there for once.

Yes and do you know what I think of this? Arxeren and Kaelia, kissing in a tree...

If you could refrain from this type of remarks it would be greatly appreciated.

Both boys could see Harry's guardian was exactly happy with them, neither was Kaelia.

What in Desda's name are you doing here?! You should be resting! But no! You're wandering in the plain...Have we taught you nothing? You didn't even do some stretching after your fights! By the way congratulations on being named Athar, both of you.

Looking strangely at Kaelia, Harry and Teneb glanced at each other before shrugging; they were used to the mood-swings of the female guardian by now.



Well, we were thinking... started Harry.

It's possible?!

Harry shot a withering glare at his guardian that clearly said 'Shut-up-or-die'

AS I was saying, we were thinking about my link with Voldemort and the possibilities to alter it.

At this point, the raven-haired wizard knew he had caught their attention.

Yes, and? Kaelia was now looking at them eagerly, well, as eagerly as an Emnag could look.

Well, is it possible to manipulate our own magic?

The two guardians looked at each other, apparently puzzled by this question.

In theory, yes, said Arxeren, but it has never been done before. Why?

Because we thought of creating a sort of new channel for those vision, one which could be controlled and wouldn't allow him to feel the curses, explained Teneb.

Arxeren and Kaelia frowned a bit.

It could work, finally said Arxeren, but we'd have to fusion with you.

What?! Teneb and Harry's cry echoed in the plain, making Arxeren and Kaelia winced.

Not so loud! We're not deaf! But to clear a few things, listen carefully. To manipulate magic's flow, unless you're a Magis, you need to access the third plain, the Magic one. The problem is that nobody, except guardians and a few other beings can enter it. To that point, the explanation made sense to Harry.

Sooo...How do we do this?



The two spirits starred at them, they had expected a great deal of talking to have them to obey.

First, where is your mark? Kaelia was the first one to recover.

Wordlessly, Teneb pointed to his right shoulder and Harry to the back of his neck. The young wizard had always wondered about his mark. He hadn't seen Teneb's before, which was strange when he came to think of it. If it was placed on his shoulder, it should have been visible during training. Pushing this question to the back of his mind he concentrated on his guardian who was currently explaining something.

...so all you have to do is relax and don't fight it. It'll feel a bit weird, but that's all...

The two Daryns had barely the time to nod their assent and relax before seeing their two guardians glow brightly, blinding them. As soon as they got their sight back, they saw two shining balls of light hovering over them instead of the spirit-dragons. The two balls suddenly dove towards and they sensed their marks tingle a bit. To their surprise, the two balls hit and entered the marks, plunging in what stood as their bodies in this plain. They looked at each other. That was definitively odd. Then they started to feel it. It was faint to begin with, then it became stronger. It wasn't painful, just plainly weird. Harry knew this should have hurt a lot, but after all they weren't in the real plain. He watched as what looked like his skin expand and turned a golden color with scales appearing. It was strange, like he was a kind of spectator. After a few seconds he realized it, he was transforming into Arxeren. The change in itself wasn't too strange: he had a Sowaroc form as an Animagus and had been working on it for quite a time now. It was the...power. It was amazing. Harry could feel the energy flowing around him, through Arxeren's eyes, the plain took a completely different aspect. Shining strings were running the place, filled with raw energy and power. Colors were everywhere, every kind, every subtle type was present, forming an harmonious landscape.

*:This is amazing...:* thought Harry

:Isn't it? :

Their was no place for mistake, it was Arxeren's tone.



*:Please, tell me he isn't in my head...:* Harry was praying every gods he knew to spare him this fate

*:Well technically, I'm always in your head...:*

*:Shit:*

*:Language:,* scolded Arxeren.

*:That's beside the point, what do we have to do now?:*

*:Just relax and watch.:*

Arxeren took control and suddenly, Harry felt the wing of the Sowaroc opening to their full length. Then he felt the power rush through the body accumulating to extraordinary proportions. It seemed to enter every fiber of his being. Through the corner of his eye, he saw that his body, or more accurately, Arxeren's body was shimmering. Suddenly he felt himself dissolve into this power, become part of it. They were now moving at lightning speed, following Magic's flows. Harry felt as if he was in a roller coaster, even if he had never been in one. The closest thing he could rely to was his trip in Gringotts.

*:Harry, be ready, we're nearly here.:* Arxeren's warning echoed in his head.

*:Alright, just one question, well two. Can I communicate with Teneb? And how can I manipulate the flows?:*

*:Well for the communication part, just send him a thought like you do with mental speech. For the manipulation...well it's like weaving: you direct the threads of magic with your mind and power. The more power you have the easier it is:* explained Arxeren

*:Oookkkaaayyy.:* The doubtful edge of Harry's voice couldn't be missed.

*:It's not that difficult.:*

*:That's what you said when you decided I needed to learn the Steeldance.:*



*:Well...you managed to do it, didn't you?:*

*:Yes, after two months of practice.:*

*:Oh! Don't be such a wet chicken! I'll be helping you! Don't worry!:*

*:It was supposed to reassure me?:*

Seeing that his guardian wasn't about to bite his bait, Harry turned his attention to his surroundings. If the first plain had been amazing, this one couldn't be described by words. His guardian had taught him about the plans, including the mysterious third one. But should he be questioned about the aspect of this plain, Harry knew for sure that he wouldn't have an answer. First he was seeing it through the eyes of his spirit guardian, and second, no description couldn't even come close to reality. There was too much...everything. The power gathered there was so grand that Harry now knew why nobody was allowed to this plan. The magic would have fried them immediately should they have tried.

*: We don't have time to spare, if we're caught, we'll be in deep shit:*

*:Language:*

*:Shut up and get on with this!:*

The slight worry in Arxeren's tone convinced Harry and turned to Kaelia and Teneb.

*Teneb?*

*Yes?*

*We have to look for my body. We won't be able to manipulate the flow if we don't.*

*Alright, but it's going to take quite a lot of time...* Teneb sounded a bit pessimistic.

*Not if we join our powers.*

*You're right, you're the base?*



*Yes, it's my body, so it'll be easier if I'm the base this time.*

*OK, I'm coming in ten seconds, be ready.* Teneb's warning echoed in Harry's mind, as the young dark-haired teenager slowly counted up to ten. When he reached ten, he opened widely his mind and sent power into his link with Teneb all the while tugging on it. They had joined a few times and usually, Teneb was the base, having more stability than Harry who often poured too much power or tug too strongly on the link. This time, however, Harry was extra careful, not wanting to disrupt the plan by an overload of power.

*Good, you've gotten better...* This time Teneb's voice came from within his own.

*Thanks, but let's get on with this.*

Together, they both started to look out for Harry's aura. From what they had both been told by their guardians, every living being possessed a magical core to which they could more or less accessed, the access determining the magical power of the being. Each core and aura had a particular signature. Harry and Teneb had had to find their own under their guardians' tutelage. Harry's was the same color as his aura: white with rainbow and metallic streaks. Teneb's looked a bit like his: it was white too but only with metallic streaks. Before she had been purple with a metallic hint. But since the day he had chose Harry's side and trained with him his aura had improved, finally reaching its actual level. However, he had been careful to hide this changer from others. They didn't have a lot of problem finding their auras. With both of their powers combined, they concentrated on Harry's core, in particular on its organization. They could make out the different points where some of the flows of power in Harry's body were knotted. They slowly went higher and finally reached the center of the young wizard's power. There it became obvious as to what the problem was. The center of Harry's power was tainted: a link of dark-reddish color was tied to it and had spread to a small part.

*There it is...*

*Yes, now, all we have to do is take care of this thing.*



Quickly they agreed on the best way to alter this link and went to work.

First the Harry-Teneb entity endeavored to sever the dark thread. Delicately like surgeons they managed to detach it and temporarily fixed it on a small ball of power they had gathered. Then came the difficult part: they had to clean the tainted parts and managed to channel the vision so that Harry would be able to command when and where he would access to them and to store those linked to Voldemort's outbursts and emotions. The cleaning part was the easier. With Arxeren and Kaelia directing the entity the two youth formed, they managed to it rather quickly. The altering took more time. First they changed the area that had been tainted a bit, adding a kind of interface on which they placed the dark link. The interface was made of a neutral kind of energy that couldn't be tainted. Then they encircled the link with the same energy.

You're ready Harry?

Whenever you are.

Then, let's do this!

On count of three. One...Two.... THREE!

At three, both of them gathered as much power as they could into a small ball which grew bigger and bigger. Then with both their will directed at this task, they positioned the large pool of power at the base of the link, then, with all their will, they started to push it along the dark thread. This was risqué: until this moment, they had only made slight alteration, but nothing too drastic, this, however was quite huge: they were creating a new link between Voldemort and Harry, except that Harry would be the only one able to control it. For a few minutes, they continued to spread the energy along the link, heading towards Voldemort's center. They finally saw it: a pool of dark obsidian color streaked with blood red and steel colors.

*Ugh!* Teneb was clearly disgusted

*I couldn't have said it better myself...* replied Harry.



*I don't want to touch that...that thing!*

*Me neither...But we need to finish this.*

They continued to provide energy and power until they reached the center of Voldemort's power.

*Can you hold it for a bit?* asked Harry. One of them had to alter a bit the center or else the energy would be tainted all will have to be redone from scraps.

*No problem.*

Breaking out of the entity they formed, Harry focused on the pulsing black threads before him. He concentrated on the part where the thread was tied to Voldemort and started to gather a bit of the neutral energy of the plan around it. First he connected it to the link Teneb and him had created. He could practically hear the relieved sigh of Teneb when he took the shining link. Then he tied it to the base of Voldemort's link. This way tainting would be impossible, but visions would still be able to come. Harry was feeling quite exhausted, Teneb had been right, it would have been easier just to sever the whole thing, but he didn't want to lose the information he could gain through his dreams. As he drew himself out of Voldemort's center, he felt a kind of tug and quickly left before he could be spotted.

*:Done!:*

*:Great now, we get out of here before They got my hide!:* Arxeren sounded quite worried.

*:They?:*

Nothing that concern you, but for now, we're leaving!

Before Harry could argue, Arxeren had taken control over his body and had started to reverse to his light state. Minutes later they were back to the first plain. And both guardians separated from their protégé



Good, They didn't notice us. By the way congratulations to you too, you did great! The relief was perceptible in Arxeren's voice.

Yes, I'm proud of you. added Kaelia.

Thanks.

Now go rest, tomorrow is going to be a tough day.

The two boys nodded, well their spirit formed nodded. They slowly exited the plain but could hear Arxeren's shout.

And don't forget to stretch!

When they were back they looked at each other and burst into peals of laughter. Wiping a tear, Harry stood up and started to stretch.

"Well, better not anger him..."

Smiling both of them went through their usual exercises. Once they were done, Harry slumped onto the ground.

"I'm beat!"

"Me too," said Teneb sitting near his friend, a bit more graciously though.

"You know what, I don't really want to go back to the dorm tonight," said Harry suddenly

"Yeah, I don't think we'll be welcome in here anymore."

"As if I was welcome there before," snorted the young wizard.

"Well, we can sleep here, I mean the weather is great, the temperature not too chill."

Harry looked at his friend, pondering on his idea.

"Why not?" with a wave of his hand he conjure two sleeping bags, being too lazy to take his wand.



Minutes later both of them were sleeping soundly and for the first night in weeks, Harry's rest wasn't disturbed by nightmares.

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They were woken up by the sun at dawn.

Yawning, Harry got up and cast a few de-wrinkling and cleaning charms on his clothes. He saw Teneb had followed his lead and motioned to him to follow him.

"Come, there's a small brook nearby, we'll be able to wash up."

"Ok"

Half an hour later both of them were taking care of Shadow and Myst. Both stallions had stayed near their riders as they were told, watching over them. While brushing their coat energetically, they discussed what was to come.

"Do you know what's going to happen?" Harry was curious and also a bit nervous about the whole thing: the tournament had been easier he knew what to expect but now he was as clueless as the other.

"Well, not really, nobody, except full-riders, knows what happens during this part of the ceremony. All I know is that a part is held in Dargana and that the Daryns are paired."

"Do we get to choose?"

"Yes, it's an important part. From what I read at the castle, partners are people who fully trust each other, who share a kind of bond or understanding of each other. It matters because of something during the day, I don't know what, all I know is that in order to success, the two partners have to trust each other completely."

"OK..."

Silence settled between them.

"Harry?"



"Teneb?"

Both of them had spoken at the same time. They smiled playfully at each other.

"Go ahead," said Harry.

"Well, do you want to be my partner?"

"It'll be my pleasure."

Quiet again, they finished taking care of their horses, equipped them and after warming them up, came back to the Headquarters galloping calmly.

Their ride went smoothly and they reached the stables an hour before breakfast. They brushed their mounts and checked their hooves and legs for little stones or small cuts. Seeing none, they freed them in one of the paddocks and headed for breakfast

First to be there, they sat in a corner and waited, talking quietly, exchanging ideas about spells, theory or idle chitchat. Pranks were talked about to. Though not being as obsessed with it as the Marauders had been or the twins, Harry had a liking for it and planned to make his 'dear' teachers regret every insults they had thrown at him. He had found a good partner in Teneb who had proved to be quite imaginative. Slowly the room filled itself with riders, Daryns and masters. None of them seemed to have noticed them and all eyes were fixed on the doors, waiting for something or someone. Finally Demenor shook a bell, signaling breakfast was to be served. Servants brought him, but as people attention was fixed on the doors, nobody noticed the woman, giving Teneb and Harry their breakfast. Only hushed conversation were taking place instead of the usual loud buzzing. Finally, being done with their breakfast, both Teneb and Harry stood up and headed for the exit, drawing the eyes of everyone present on them. They were nearly at the doors when Demenor's voice stopped them.

"Daryns?"



Slowly they turned to him, executing the common salute to the headmaster without any enthusiasm. They, then, waited for him to speak.

Sighing before the guarded look of both youth, Demenor stood up.

## "Approach"

Sharing a look, the two youth walked swiftly to the head table. No words were said. Seeing they weren't going to speak, Demenor had no choice but initiate the talk.

"After the display you pulled out yesterday, we decided to name both of you Athar of this group."

Waiting for any kind of reaction to this announcement, expecting some joy, happiness to show, Demenor frowned at the blank masks the two teenagers sported.

"I believe you're aware of the duties that come with this charge and that you'll live up to it."

Short nods were his only answer.

Seeing he wasn't about to get any answer from them, he handed them the insignias of Athars, a small earring shaped like a dragon in flight and a patch to put on their clothes with the nine runes symbolizing the nine dragons written in silver with dark purple background on it.

"Thank you," they said together, accepting them.

"You're dismissed."

Immediately they turned and left saluting one last time before exiting the doors. Demenor looked at the masters who were now deeply interested in the food filling their plate. Yes, a talk was definitively needed once all of this would be over.

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Teneb and Harry had gone to their dorms while all the others were down, eating and took their clothes for the next two days: those for the day and the other the last part of the ceremony which would be held the next day.

They dressed up, putting on long white tunics over gray pants with a black belt, their patch visible on their right arm, their earring in place, their hair out of their face, their clothes spotless. They noticed that the patch had changed color.

"Chameleon color, will adapt to any kind of outfit," explained Teneb, catching the surprised glance of Harry.

"OK, Ready?"

"Whenever you are."

They both headed towards Dargana.

Dargana was a holy place for the riders, it was believed to be the place where the spirits of the dead dragons and the Ancient were staying. A magnificent building were standing there, it seemed to be glow with an ethereal light. The building seemed to shot in the sky, feeling accentuated by the towers flanking the entrance. Harry noticed that he had been built with different types of marble, obsidian and other kinds of rocks he didn't know. Glass and crystal were other components: numerous and huge windows were adorning the side of the building, crystal ornaments were omnipresent, giving to the building an unreal shine.

"Wow!" Harry was starrng breathless at the masterpiece before them. "It's incredible! Who built this?"

"Nobody knows...it was there before the Headquarters were built."

"Whoever it was, he or she was a genius."

"Yes, now come on, we have to enter," said Teneb, dragging his friend who was still starrng at the amazing building. The large door barring the entrance was made of ebony and oak and decorated with finely chiseled sculptures picturing flying dragons, surrounding by



runes stating the true traits of a rider: tolerance, solidarity, generosity, forgiveness, impartiality, justice and fairness, equality, open-mindedness, honesty. Inside, the sight was even more incredible. Harry felt as he had entered a fairytale's castle and that a regal crowned couple would burst from one of the door, with good fairies at their sides. The inside looked a bit like a cathedral: a large aisle with high sculpted pillars made of glass-like material but which seemed filled with light and hard like granite. Doors were opening on the aisle, made of ebony and ornate with ivory. Benches were placed on each side of the aisle. On the walls ancient looking tapestries were hanging, showing dragons and their history. Despite their age, they had conserved their original colors. The aisle lead to a large circular space illuminated by the light falling from the huge windows; in middle stood an altar with nine faces sporting each kind of dragon. A large metallic cup was standing on it. Neither Harry nor Teneb could make out the material, but it looked like the one used for their weapons. The cup was ornate with strange forms. It looked like some kinds of letters. Statues were completing the decorations of the place. Chairs were placed on each side of the altar and throne like ones were put in a half circle on a stage behind it. Two of the chairs on the right side looked more important than the others. All of them were made of carved ebony, but those two also had ivory incrustations. They both moved aside, waiting for someone to direct them. Twenty minutes later, as they were engrossed in a chess game, they heard footsteps coming their way and stood from the bench where they had settled to play. Banishing the chess set with a wave of his hand, Teneb looked at the entrance and saw Demenor, most of the masters, all the Daryns and a few riders walk down the aisle.

"Harry, Teneb, sit on these two," Demenor pointed to the ornate chairs. "Daryns, sit, wherever you wish, but side by side with your chosen partner." After a minute, all the Daryns were seated. Demenor looked carefully at them. Most of them were looking expectantly at the cup, but he noticed some who had sour look and a strange gleam into their eyes. Dismissing these thoughts, the headmaster looked at the two youth who had been the subject of everyone's conversation since yesterday. They were still wearing their blank face, looking straight ahead of them. Demenor thought he saw a slight smile on the hu...no, Harry and Teneb's face.



The masters placed themselves before the throne like chair and sat, except for Demenor.

"Daryns, today marks your entrance in adulthood. Today, you'll lose your childhood and everything connected to it, today, you'll learn your true name, the one by which you'll be known by the dragons and your closest friend and family. You have made your mentors and masters proud thorough your whole training. Soon you'll be independent adult who will honor, I'm sure, this faculty and support the pride and duties of true riders. Let's begin."

Harry was finding it difficult not to laugh at Demenor's little speech, as if his mentor and masters had been proud of him and there was no way he was going to 'honor this faculty'! They were really stupid if they thought for one second that he owed them anything.

Teneb was finding it amusing too, but couldn't help being a little hurt as he remembered the reaction of his mentor as the news of his friendship with Harry spread. Kario had called him to his room. Before that, he and Teneb had shared a good relationship, Kario was proud of his charge and always welcomed him and helped him when Teneb was facing a problem. This day had reduced all of this to nothing. Their talk had been difficult and by the end Kario was yelling before storming out of the room. Teneb could remember his last words. "Hear me Daryn Teneb, I disown you as my protégé until you come to your sense and end this stupid friendship with that scum. Only then, I'll welcome you back, until that day you're not my Daryn anymore!"

That was the last time they had talked and Teneb had been determined to prove to the rider that his choice had been the right on and that he, the almighty Kario had been wrong.

Meanwhile, Demenor had sat slowly and extended his hand towards the cup, imitated by all the masters. Muttering a short incantation, beams of light left their hands and hit the cup that glowed brightly. A tall lady, dressed in a white robes (like Roman or Greek ones) entered, carrying another cup filled with a translucent liquid.

"A Doija, priestess of Lunai..."



Harry nodded, he had seen the midnight blue moon shaped mark on her forehead. She stepped forwards and emptied her cup into the large one. The liquid glowed too and took a nacre-like color. Banishing her cup, she took the other one who had by now stopped glowing since the masters and Demenor had stopped chanting. Slowly she approached the first Daryn, Chrisianne and presented him the cup. Wordlessly, he took it and drink a gulp of the liquid and handed the cup back to the priestess. Then a man dressed in the kind of clothes the woman wore, but golden which identify him as a Deiser, a priest of Solyen, entered, holding a box magnificently carved, painted and ornate. Opening it, he revealed, six sets of rings, made of the same metal than the cup and supporting a single crystal. Taking one he put it on the little finger of Chrisianne's right hand. They repeated the process with his neighbor. Harry and Teneb were the last ones and were looking intensively at the two people, because of that they missed Garth's gesture as he poured something in the cup while drinking, before handing it back. As he was placed on Teneb's right, it was now the turn of the young elf, then Harry's. Both of them drank it without a thought and accepted the ring.

Slowly they started to feel drowsy and knowing better than fight it, they let themselves fall into a heavy trance.

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For once, Harry was alone, he was floating into nothingness, then he was suddenly thrown into fire, he could feel the power of the element rushing through every part of his body, a destructive, unpredictable power, it was almost painful. Harry didn't know what to do, he couldn't escape, couldn't fight it. So he submit, accepting it and before he could realize it he was tossed around by the air, feeling the strength of it through him. His first reflex was to fight it, to try to regain a little control but he couldn't, so remembering what had happened with fire, he opened his mind to the power of air and welcomed it, in the same fashion water and earth power washed through him, leaving him panting, but in a strange way refreshed and more powerful than ever. A peaceful scenery developed before him and he started to walk around, looking for someone or something. He spotted magnificent weapons, gold and other riches straight ahead of him, under a tree. Suddenly he heard a cry on his right. Breaking in a run he was careful



not to make too much noise and stay hidden. What he saw made his blood boil, five men were cornering a woman, her son and her daughter, the man who must have been the father was lying on the ground, dead or unconscious.

Harry gritted his teeth and looked at the attackers, they were only five, he knew he could beat them, but he would have appreciate to have Teneb with him, it would have been done quicker. He didn't have any weapon but knew enough about hand-to-hand combat to knock them out for a while. As he was done with two of them, he heard a pained cry behind him only to see Teneb knocking the daylight out of a burly one.

"You're okay Harry?"

"Yes, thanks."

"No problem"

They turned towards the family gathered in the clearing. Harry and Teneb approached them. The woman was kneeling before the man who looked like her husband, talking to him.

"Are you alright?"

She looked at him.

"Could you help him? He's not moving..." She was nearly in hysterics.

Teneb knelt at his side and put his hands on him, scanning him.

"He's still alive, but really weak, Harry, I need your help."

Harry joined him and together, they started the healing process. Minutes later the family was reunited, the father still a little groggy. They started to thank them profusely, they had been attacked as they were going back to their home.

As Harry and his friend were about to leave, the mother grabbed his arm.



"Wait, we want to thank you for what you did."

She unfastened her necklace: a masterpiece: priceless gems intertwined with pure silver and put it in Harry's hand.

"Take it, it's a family jewel, passed down from generation to generation, I want you to take it."

Harry glanced at Teneb.

I can't accept that!

Me neither. The determination behind Teneb's voice reassured Harry. Gently he took her hand and placed the necklace in it, then closing her hand around it.

"Keep it, we can't accept that."

"But I must insist that..."

"No, thank you, but we can't."

She insisted again, offering them money, but they kept on refusing.

Then the little girl came to them with a little flower necklace.

"I did them for you..."

Smiling, Harry knelt near her.

"Really?"

Meanwhile the boy was tugging at Teneb's arm.

"Hey, do you think I'll be able to fight like you?"

Teneb took in his arm.

"Perhaps, with a little training, but remember this, little one, sometimes fighting isn't the best solution."

The boy who must have been about nine year-old nodded gravely.



After a few words, they parted from the family who assured them that they would be able to go back to their house without help.

Both of the youth resumed their walk. They were stopped by a mighty dragon. He was different from every kind of dragon they had met before.

Young one, you passed our trials and proved to be worthy of your title, I will now give you your name of power. You! He turned to Teneb who bowed before the majestic beast. You'll be known as Heldren, the Wise, powerful yet kind and tolerant, leader but humble, live up to that name, and you...

His head turned to Harry who held his gaze.

You'll be known as Astyan, child of power, born to rule, yet always there to help, powerful, destined to greatness.

The world around them started to fade away. But they could hear the last words of the Dragon.

Remember that you always have a choice to make and that's what define you. Farewell and good luck little ones.

They slowly came back to the real world and blinked a few times to readjust to the light around them. From what they could see outside, it was way up into the afternoon.

Everybody was looking at them and they noticed that they were the last ones to come back to consciousness.

Demenor spoke up.

"Daryns, your name is now ours, treat it carefully as it holds many powers, to seal this, let's drink to your future."

Cups appeared in their hands and a bottle made her way from Chrisianne to Teneb and Harry who again didn't notice Garth's attitude and gestures.



As they both got up, once everything was over which included several speeches, two chants, one to Lunai, the other to Solyen. Feeling a bit dizzy, Harry grabbed the back of his chair to regain his balance. At his side, Teneb experimented the same thing. They walked out of Dragana and headed towards the paddocks. Slowly they started to felt some pain. It started as a small ache but took greater and greater proportions.

"What's...i-is.... Ha-happe...ning Harry?" panted Teneb, leaning on the fence.

"Don't know..." Harry's answer was uttered through gritted teeth to prevent him from screaming. The pain was now reaching Cruciatus pain. He was too leaning on the fence and would have fallen without it.

"I can't access...my powers."

As Teneb managed to say this, Harry immediately tried to use his healing abilities, only to be blocked.

"Me too..." Now his voice had taken a slightly panicked edge.

"Well, well, well...What do we have here? A traitor and a piece of scum..."

Both teenager knew this voice and turned to face its owner.

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Voldemort had been resting for a few hours. He had been working on the book, translating it, trying to decipher what the great Grindelwald had planned to do. The man had filled his books with traps, charades to prevent people from using his discoveries.

Hearing people talking loudly, he sighed, they never learned! He got up and left his room to find four of his Death Eaters arguing: Crabbe, Goyle, Malfoy and Avery.

"I must see our master Crabbe!"



"He's resting, you'll have to wait, Lucius."

"I WAS resting, until I was woken up by your yells."

The four of them bowed deeply before him. Voldemort enjoyed the fear he could feel radiating from them. He had power over them, they were at his beck and call.

"We apologize my Lord, but we have important information." Lucius finally dared to break the silence.

"Speak."

"My son reported to me that the Mudblood Granger managed to find one of Grindelwald's diary which mentioned The opening of the Hell's Gates and Djaira."

"And Avery?"

"Dumbledore had managed to obtain the support of the old Vampire. Our men arrived too late and were killed. Some fledging were about to follow us, but the Ancient have started a purge of their ranks."

"What about the werewolves?"

"They're still undecided. Dumbledore' man, Lupin have managed to catch their interest. With the near firing of Fudge and the arrival of a new minister approved by Dumbledore, the old fool is making some attractive promises to them..."

Voldemort frowned, well he had known that the fool will make it hard for him. And for the mudblood, she had proved to be brilliant, a pity she was muggle-born, she would have been a valuable asset to him. Anyway, he'll just ask some of the juniors to take care of her.

"Well, my fellow Death Eaters, this information is valuable."

They smiled a bit.

"But I do not like to be woken up! Crucio"



With a casual wave of his wand he cursed Avery then Lucius, not long, a few seconds.

"Yes, my Lord."

They bowed and left quickly.

"And you," he turned to the two burly men guarding his door, "be silent. Silencio!"

Voldemort stormed into his chamber and sat at his desk. Grabbing his quill he started to write when suddenly his quill broke under his grasp. Taking a short breath, he tried to call himself. Someone was playing with his magic, he could sense it. He knew that energy, that power. His feature took a vicious smirk.

"POTTER!"

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Hi!

Thanks to everybody who reviewed!

I hope you enjoyed this chapter, this one is quite long...

Thanks again!

Naia



## Chapter Fifteen

*"What's...i-is.... ha-happe...ning Harry?" panted Teneb, leaning on the fence.*

*"Don't know..." Harry's answer was uttered through gritted teeth to prevent him from screaming. The pain was now reaching Cruciatus pain. He was too leaning on the fence and would have fallen without it.*

*"I can't access...my powers."*

*As Teneb managed to say this, Harry immediately tried to use his healing abilities, only to be blocked.*

*"Me too..." Now his voice had taken a slightly panicked edge.*

*"Well, well, well...What do we have here? A traitor and a piece of scum..."*

*Both teenager knew this voice and turned to face its owner.*

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Panting and leaning heavily on the fence, trying not to succumb to the excruciating pain that was tearing them, Teneb and Harry attempted to straighten up. However their glare could have melted stone.

"Garth," Harry managed to spit out, putting all his scorn for the Magis in this single name.

"Very good human, you're able to remember a name."

"What did you do to us?" Teneb managed to ask this before stumbling from the pain.

Garth's look hardened, if that was possible.

"Nothing you didn't deserve, traitor!"

His little clique, which was standing behind him, snickered at this.



Garth approached them, twirling his dagger in his hand.

"But I'll let the brain behind this explain." With a flourish of his free hand he motioned to Vlad to come.

"It's simple enough... You'd be amazed as to the effect a few drops of a potion can have on someone... Have you heard of the Finite Draught and of the Dolorais Venom?" The question was asked casually but you could see the smug gleam in the eyes of the elf.

Harry blanched at this, of course he knew them. Arxeren had given lessons in Potions. Harry knew he would never be a master at this but he wasn't as hopeless as Snape said he was. He was capable of brewing most of the useful potions, but complex ones, like Wolfsbane were way out of his league. Despite this, he had learned the basis of most potions used, either light or dark.

"You didn't!"

Both potions were dark ones: the Finite Draught had been designed by a Rogue mage in Merlin's time. It suppressed all the powers of a person for ten hours, and left her weak for a day after. The Dolorais Venom on the other hand had been labeled as the equivalent of the Cruciatus. It slowly triggered every nerves in the victim's body, bringing her more and more pain and usually pushed her over the brink of insanity.

"Of course we did! What did you think? That after humiliating us like you did at the Tournament, you'll get away with it, that we would congratulate you?" hissed Chrisianne angrily.

"We won fairly!" Harry managed to choke out between waves of pain.

"We don't care!" Ribor replied, seething. "How could you have won! You're scum, you're powerless!"

Garth stepped forwards, caressing Harry's cheek with his dagger. The young wizard's will was so focused on standing that he couldn't push him back without risking to fall on the grounds.

"And even if you weren't, now you are....," he whispered to him.



The Magis straightened.

"Because of the oath we took, I can't kill you, I realized it after our last encounter."

Strangely it didn't reassure Harry, on the opposite, it made him even more worried.

"But you have to pay for what you did to us."

An insane glint was slowly making his way in his look.

"Originally this was to punish you for humiliating us, but now for preventing you from getting our name!"

At this, Harry looked strangely at him.

Trying to concentrate on Teneb, he tried to contact his friend.

*Teneb? What does he mean?*  
A weak thought answered him.

*I haven't the slightest idea about what he's talking about... But apparently none of them found their power-name. If it's true it means that none of them will bond to a dragon...*

At this Harry recalled his last encounter with the Sowaroc, in particular his words: 'However be sure that no dragons will bond with those responsible for this.' He sent it to Teneb, hoping that the young elf would receive it.

*They deserve it, came the weak reply.*

*Perhaps, but in the mean time, I'm more concerned about our current predicament....*

During that quick exchange, Garth and his friends had completely surrounded the two friends.

"You know what human? You're going to pay. We're going to make sure that no dragon will chose you. After all, what kind of dragon



would want to bond with a human who can't fight?" Malice was audible in the Magis' voice.

"What do you mean?" stuttered Teneb, about to collapse under the pain.

"Simple, how will you manage to fight if you can't stand."

At the same time, he and Ribor leaned on them and before they could react, they felt a atrocious pain in their legs.

Teneb and Harry fell this time, it was too much to bear but they didn't scream. Gritting his teeth, Harry was resolved not to give them this pleasure.

A copper taste filled his mouth as he bit his tongue.

Finally he blacked out and felt Teneb doing so too.

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I'm going to have their hides!

Harry looked around him groggily. It was strange, he didn't recall to have come to the plan. What was going on?

These little back-stabbers! They'll have to pay for that!

Trying to clear his head, Harry finally noticed Arxeren ranting in front of him.

Harry, you're back! How are you feeling? His rage had vanished, replaced by concern for his charge.

Shaking his head in an attempted to clear his head, Harry focused on his guardian.

Like I was run over by a truck.

No wonder after what happened, said the spirit, anger coming back full force in his reptilian eyes.



At these words, memories came back to Harry. Rage filled him immediately, but he forced himself to control it. He couldn't spare energy for useless anger fits.

What did they do to us? How is Teneb?

Apart from poisoning you?

Yes.

You're not going to like it. They cut some of your tendons...

Harry was stunned.

They WHAT! Then recovering slightly from the initial shock he held his hand. No, forget that question, how much damage did they make?

They severed both of your Achilles' tendons, knees' tendons, and wrists' ones.

Taking deep breath, Harry tried to calm himself. This time he wouldn't be that forgiving, they would learn once for all not to mess with him.

Why? I mean, I'll be able to heal myself once the Finite Draught wore off.

Arxeren fidgeted a bit.

Well, what do you remember on the Dolorais Venom, beside its painful properties?

It will leave the body strained as if the pain had been real and really weak for a week.

There's an other one which isn't well-known: the Dolorais will make any injuries inflicted while the effects are visible impossible to heal magically.

But this will leave me handicapped! Severed tendons don't heal on their own! And what about Teneb? Harry tried to break his train of thoughts.



Same thing.

Harry's feature fell in a defeated mask.

What are we going to do, Arxeren? Is there a way to fix this whole mess?

I second that question, said someone else.

Harry turned and saw Teneb approaching, with Kaelia at his side.

Both guardians looked at each other, apparently hesitating over the course of action.

There is a way, but you'll only learned it after the bonding, we can't say more.

The Bonding? But how will we be able to bond if we can't reach the Den? Teneb was distraught about this.

We can help you with that part though, Kaelia cut in.

Yes, said Arxeren. Kaelia and me will numb your nerves so you won't feel any pain from your injuries, we'll also prevent them from worsening. Then you'll use your Element to move yourself.

Alright, thank you a lot, both of you.

Kaelia gave the young wizard a dragonian smile.

You're welcome, dear, but they'll be Hell to pay for those sorry excuses of Daryns. This time her look was truly frightening. Now we have another problem on the hand. You remember the Finite Draught they gave you? Seeing their nods, Teneb's guardian resumed her talk. It will not wear out in time for the bonding and you need to have access to your powers. You'll have to lift this block, but this time we can't bring you to the Magic plain. We were nearly caught last time and it'll be too risky to make a new journey there.

Definitively. Arxeren agreed wholeheartedly.

How can we counter it then?



They started to chant lightly and started to dive into Harry's mind, looking around for a block. As their powers were completely gone, they had to only use their will and mind-powers. Finally their united minds found it. Over one of Harry's centers, a dark veil was spread



ensnaring it in its depths. Like seamstresses, they tugged on the veil, extracting something looking like a thread. Little by little, forced a few times regain their strength, they finally managed to remove it. Taking the corrupted energy in, they entangled it in a web and tightened it slowly, crushing it, reducing it to nothingness.

*Now, your turn!*

This time it would be easier as Harry would have access to his powers, no matter how weak they would be.

Using the same method, they started to look around for the same kind of veil. Finding it, they took care of it as they did for Harry. Finally it was over.

*Done!* sighed the young wizard.

*Let's go back,* suggested the elf.

*Gladly!*

They started to part when a thing caught Harry's spiritual eyes.

*Teneb? Did you place another block on yourself?*

*No, why?*

*Look at his!*

The two joined minds turned to look at the most important center of the young elf's powers.

*What's this?!*

Teneb sounded completely stunned.

*You tell me,* replied Harry examining the sickening black and green web over the center. *It looks like it's feeding on it... Is it normal?*

*No, no...*

*Do you have any idea about who could have put this on you?*



*Can we find who it is?*

*Not before we have our powers back... Anyway, we're going to have to lift this...*

*Did you checked if you're under this too?*

*No.*

*Let's see, I've a weird feeling about this.*

It was no surprise to find the same kind of block over Harry's power center.

*We'll have to ask Arxeren and Kaelia. I don't want to take a risk this close to the bonding. Moreover our situation is bad enough without worsening it,* Teneb finally said.

Agreeing, Harry started to initiate the parting.

A few seconds later they were back to their respective bodies.

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Harry blinked a few times, trying to shield his eyes from the dawn's light, but his hand wasn't responding.

Stop that Harry, you'll worsen the wounds!

Aweren's shout startled him and memories of the past day's events came back to him.

The Dolorais has worn out, I'm only numbing completely your wounds and stopped them from getting worse or festering.

Thanks, said Harry, still groggy.

Do you remember what we talked about?

Yeah



Good, Now I must leave, I won't be able to interfere more than I've already.

Thanks again Arxeren.

No need, I thought the thing you call brain had finally registered that I was your guardian, meaning the one who look after and protect you.

You know that I'm hopeless! That's why you love me.

Go prepare, and don't forget to block and bandage the wounds, you insufferable brat.

Arxeren left quickly and Harry turned to Teneb.

"Well, let's see if we're able to move ourselves..."

Harry started to concentrate on his Fire Element while Teneb called the Air. All the while, he whistled sharply for Shadow, imitated by his friend.

The two stallions arrived rapidly, as they had managed to stand up, completely supported by their Element, nothing weighing on their wounds. They had had troubles with their Element as their powers were still reduced and their bodies heavily strained from the Dolorais Venom. Apparently they had convulsed at a moment

Slowly, the two horses took them to their little hideout on the cliff. They had placed their ceremonial outfit here, knowing that putting them in the dorm was like sending an invitation to Garth and his clique to go damage them. The bonding was to take place in the afternoon, one hour after noon.

They still had three hours to get ready. First, they removed the simple blocks and bandages they had put on before mounting their horses. As they couldn't jump on them, the two animals had to kneel to let them on their backs.

Harry couldn't repressed a wince as he saw the extent of the injury and heard the gasp from Teneb. They had really done a good job. The tendons were completely severed with little hope of healing



correctly without magic's help. Even if it was to be cured the Muggle way it would let scars and there would be complications, both of them wouldn't be able to reach real fitness again and would lose some of their abilities as the tendons wouldn't be up to bear big shocks.

Well that wouldn't stop Harry from kicking their sorry asses to the ninth hell.

*Leave some for me.*

Smiling at his friend's remark, Harry took out a first aid kit he had always kept their in case he injured himself while training. Unable to use his hand, he resolved to using Telekinesis. Taking sterile bandages, splints which could be made invisible, blocking straps, disinfectant, they cleaned, bandaged and blocked their wounds during the following hour, everything Done through Telekinesis or Element manipulation, as Telekinesis was draining, and they couldn't really afford it at this time.

"Done," announced Teneb.

"Me too," said Harry. "We have two hours to eat, dress and go back there," he added, looking t his watch, which he had repaired earlier in the year. Using their Elements, they managed to eat a bit, then relaxed for about thirty minutes.

"We should get ready, we barely have an hour left," remarked Teneb.

"Yes, but drink this first." With a little push from his Fire Element, he threw his friend a vial which Teneb caught with a little cloud. Raising it to his eyes, he shot a confused glance to his friend.

"Strengthening Potion, will last for two to three hours," explained Harry, drinking some himself and waiting for the potion to kick in.

Ten seconds later he sensed his powers back and with a wave on his hand, summoned his ceremonial outfit. Concentrating on the clothes before him, he willed them to appear on himself. It took him a few minutes but he managed to get dressed. He was now wearing tight black trousers and black boots who stopped a little under his knees, a white shirt with sleeves which looked suspiciously like the one worn



by nobles during Louis XIV's time. A sleeveless crimson robe was placed over it, with a blood red high collar, closed by a line of golden buttons which went from his throat to his left shoulder. The whole robe was made of a material which looked like silk with golden threads running through it, forming an intricate pattern. Runes were embroidered on the collar. They fell to his knees, with two slits on both side starting from the hips. The hem held the same runes as the collar along with the name of the nine older dragons in Elvish. Their swords hanging at a black belt completed the outfit. Through the corner of his eye, he saw Teneb doing the same and waited for him to finish. With a few swishes of their hands they took and put on their weapons, then equipped their horses. They had created ceremonial trappings: the saddle was shining and had been decorated with gems. The sheets they used were embroidered. The bridle was made of the finest leather they had found which was incrustated with ivory and gems' powder. Harry and Teneb had taken extra care of their hooves, their coats were shining with care, their manes and tails were silky and floating in the light breeze. They proudly held their heads high, parading a little.

Smiling slightly at his stallion's antics, Harry glanced at his watch.

"Thirty minutes left"

"Well, we might as well get moving, we'll take our time."

"Alright."

"And, for the record, if one of them try anything, I'll fry them, I don't care about what'll happen then. Anyway, they won't escape me. Once this is over and I find a way to heal those injuries, I swear they'll rue the day they decided to mess with me."

The cold anger behind those words made Teneb shiver a bit. This dark side of Harry was unnerving him a little, and it was at times like those that he was quite grateful to be on his side. Moreover, they deserved it.

"Just leave me some..."

Harry mock bowed.



"Of course."

It took them twenty minutes to reach the Den, their horses walking at a comfortable pace, which wasn't worsening their wounds. Before entering, they renewed their bandages, they wouldn't let anybody see them. They would pull such a show that Garth and his little goons would be green with envy.

"Well let's go," whispered Harry, letting his Element flare around him, surrounding him with an halo of flames, while Teneb draped himself into swirling white smoke, the smoke being a little trick he had invented.

The two stallions fell into a solemn and regal walk as they entered, earning astonished gasps as they entered the place.

დავით ბერიძე

They stepped in the Den, drawing all the eyes on them. Using their Elements they dismounted and glided towards the other Daryns, sending icy and scornful glances to Garth, the kind of looks which promised a long agony to the receiver. They were the last ones to arrive and after a few minutes, Demenor rose to his feet.

"Daryns, today you passed every of our trials, you earned your name in our folds. Each of us made us proud by holding the values of our Order."

*Is he blind or simply gullible and naive?* asked Harry.

*Blind I suppose...*, Teneb sounded a bit bitter.

"I won't talk for long, as I know, for having experienced it myself, that you're eager to find your partner. The Dragon which will chose won't only be a partner. He will also be your companion, your equal, your confidant, your friend. Nothing can compare to this relationship, to this degree of trust. At the end of this day you'll have gain your place there and tomorrow, each of you will, with the masters, mentors and myself as well as a few representatives of the riders, ride to Horevald to pledge your loyalties and support to King Enrys. But for now, let's the bonding of this hopeful minds begin!"



*What. Is. This. Pledge. About?*

Harry's tone was cold, a sign of repressed anger.

*I'll explain later, please...*

*Alright, but you better have a good explanation...*

One by one, the Daryns started to approach the nine statues erected in the Den. Each of them represented the first of each race of Dragon.

Harry and Teneb were the last ones to go, because of their Athar status. Deciding that if they were to make a show, they might do it together, they walked to the first statue, their strides synchronized.

They saw Effilin make a move to stop them, but Demenor held him back. Together, both teenager halted before the first statue, picturing Altaïr, the Azurean.

Ignoring the stares and above all the slight pain, that even their guardians couldn't suppress, they fell on one knee, unsheathed their swords and raised it at head level. They, then, placed it at the feet of the statue, while chanting the ritual and immemorial pledge to the Dragons. They were bathed in a comfortable, but blinding, light which slowly faded. During this, the Daryns which had preceded them had only manage to earn a dull throbbing or a simple light. If the spectators had need another proof of their power it couldn't have been better.

As they approached the last statues, of an Emnag and a Sowaroc, they felt a little sting in their back. Without bothering to turn, they drew up a shield and sent a little of their own medicine back to the caster.

This time they knelt and bowed, hands crossed on their heart, before raising their swords and repeating the same actions they had done in front of the other statues. It was like two suns had erupted in the Den. Teneb and Harry got up, with difficulties as their constant use of their Element, plus some Telekinesis, had started to take their toll on them, despite the Strengthening Potion. They went back to their place and waited for the ceremony to continue.



Shaking slightly, the headquarters' leader rose to his feet and raised his arms.

"I call upon the powers of the Dragons in this time of need. These young proved themselves worthy and seek their equal. Hear my call and answer my prayer."

Immediately, lights appeared and started to gather; there was different kind of colors and textures and none of them mixed.

Show off.

Didn't you say you had to stay out of this?

Arxeren didn't answer.

As Harry had been distracted by his guardian, the lights had formed reptilian bodies and with an explosion of color, kind of like fireworks, the Dragons appeared. Teneb smiled discreetly at this display, having seen two of them move without all of this. But he had to admit the sight was breathtaking: before them stood a Firelans, two Dewat, two Quear, a Windscan, two Duskers, two Azureans, two Dawnris, and of course a Sowaroc and an Emnag. Gasps erupted thorough the stands at the appearance of the last two, followed by whispers, everyone trying to guess who were the Daryns who had earn such partners.

The Sowaroc stepped forwards.

We heard your call, riders, and answered it.

"We thank the Powers for your presence," answered the leader.

The Dragon turned his golden head towards the Daryns, looking at each of them and lingering a bit longer on Harry and Teneb.

Did they prove their worth?

"They did."

Then, let's this bonding strengthen our links.



Demenor nodded.

"Daryns! Approach!"

Obeying, they stepped closer as Demenor walked to them and watched as they placed themselves in line.

"Today, you'll leave the state of Daryns once for all and to mark this, your mark will be removed to be only replaced by your partner, thus giving you the rider's status."

He walked along the line, stopping before each youth and placing his hand on their foreheads. Harry was the last in line and tensed as his so-called mentor halted in front of him. He felt the elf's hand on his head and a small tingle. While withdrawing his hand, Demenor looked straight in his eyes.

"We have to talk," he said simply.

"Maybe you do, but I don't," Harry replied coldly, "there's nothing left to talk about."

Demenor looked away, avoiding the emerald eyes, full of reproach and scorn. He sighed, whatever had went wrong, it had sure screwed much of his chances to have the hum-, no Harry, on his side.

He brought his attention back to the subject at hand.

"Turn around and kneel before those who'll decide of your fate," he announced, always slightly amused by the pompous ritual.

Soon, all the Daryns were waiting for the Dragons' judgement.

Inir was the first one.

The Sowaroc approached him and bore into his eyes.

Impulsive and even thoughtless, but true to your beliefs, be careful not to mix loyalty and narrow-mindedness... but you're worthy. He turned to his peers. Who will take him as his chosen?

After a few seconds of debate, a Quear stepped forwards.



I will.

The Earth Dragon stopped before the Daryn and lowered his head to his level, staring in his eyes. A brown light surrendered them and faded after a few seconds, leaving an ecstatic-looking Inir. His mark was now on his right temple and Harry noticed his robes had now sleeves which flared at his wrists with a large velvet hem. Demenor walked to him, bowed to the Quear and help him up.

"Welcome Inir," he said, smiling.

It was now the Emnag's turn to judge and she stopped near Kobalt.

Torn, but loyal to those who gain your trust, you'll have to chose soon, little one. She seemed to be boring an hole in his head. Who will take him?

This time it was a Dewat who answered and bonded with the young Elemental. They continued like this; Opheria partnered with a Dusker; in Arnelle's and Malisa's case, the comments were even less positive, and the Dragons took a longer time before finally choosing them: Arnelle was picked by a Dawnris and Malisa by a small Azurean. It was now Garth's turn, as a Dusker approached him. The Magis straightened and looked smugly at the Sowaroc, an assured smile on his lips.

Two minutes had passed in a deadly silence, when the Dragon shook his head.

You're not worthy of our kind... I'll spare you my judgement.

The effects of these simple words could compared to those of a bomb's explosion: astonishment was plastered on everyone's faces. Garth was gawking at the mighty creature, all smugness gone. His face was becoming a strange shade of gray, a sign of deep shock for his people.

"W-What?"

You're not worthy, repeated the Dusker.



A stunned silence had fallen on the stands as the situation dawned on everybody.

As Garth seemed to be rooted to the grounds, gaping incredulously at the Dragon, a Dawnris took his place and walked to Vlad. This time it only took a few seconds for her to give her judgement.

You're not worthy.

"What? What?! WHAT?" The elf was getting hysterical, but the Dawnris ignored him and turned to Xjahl, who was now trembling before the iridescent eyes.

Neither are you... or you, she continued, walking to Chrisianne, or you, she added to Ribor.

The five ex-Daryns were gaping at her. This... this overgrown lizard had squashed all their dreams! She couldn't! She didn't have the rights!

Without thinking, Garth unsheathed his sword and lunged at the Dragon, aiming for its head, his eyes completely black, meaning rage and/or craziness. He was however thrown back by a jet of flames. Looking up, he saw the human, towering over him, his hand raised.

"Teneb and I have a score to settle with you lot, once this is over. I don't want you injured before because of your foolishness. This is reserved for us," he said icily.

You just proved me right, added the Dusker, you're not fit for this institution, despite your capacities.

Not waiting for them to recover, an Azurean approached Teneb, ignoring the shell-shocked youth which were looking around, trying to find a way to alter the Dragons' decision.

The huge Dragon plunged his cerulean eyes into Teneb's.

Loyal to your friend and your beliefs, but open-minded and thoughtful, ready to revised your judgement... Tolerant, but disillusioned and



disappointed. The Azurean gave the elf a reptilian smile. Powerful too... You are worthy, Lightkeeper. He glanced at the other dragons.

Who will chose him?

Before anyone could have say something, the mighty creatures parted, letting one of them step forwards.

I will.

Hushed whispers ran through the stands as the riders ogled at the silver dragon who had claimed Teneb as hers. An Emnag... There hadn't been a match like this for decades.

Teneb crossed his hands on his chest, bowed and saluted in the ancient way:

"Kren yn tasiln"

Athalan yn invenia, answered the dragon.

A silver glow surrounded both of them for a minute before fading, leaving a beaming Teneb.

*Harry! She healed me!*

*Really?*

*Yes! Her name is Gae.*

Teneb sounded overjoyed, a fact which pleased Harry as the coming days promised to be hard on both of them, he was relieved to know that Teneb would have someone to help and support him.

*Even your tendons?  
Yeah, and to quote her; she'll have the hides of those responsible.* He then added as in an afterthought, *she is pretty angry right now.*

*As long as she leaves me some...* Harry was smiling widely.

Their little conversation was interrupted by a Windscand which stopped before Harry.



Loyal to those you trust but defiant. Fiery and protective but cold. Determined to achieve your goals, but not to the point of betraying your ideals and beliefs. Cunning but brave. You are worthy, Child of Power.

As usual, he turned to his peers.

Who will chose this Daryns as his?

A silence fell on the Den. A fly could have been heard and Harry recalled a similar scene about a year ago. The spectators were slowly getting agitated, hushed whispers were flying back and forth: a human was worthy? Powerful? What was this Child of Power business? How could he be worthy when elves, Magis and Elementals weren't? Was this a joke? Had he cursed the Dragons? Those were the questions every riders had in mind. Suddenly a voice boomed through the area.

I will.

And chaos followed these simple words.

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Snape had been taking well-deserved rest when his mark burned. After the arrival of the students from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, the number of classes had been increased as the students were sorted into the four Houses. As a result, each House got three Heads, for two reasons: the increased number of students and the fact that most of the Heads were Order-members and were there often away. This system allowed the House to have at least one Head in the castle all the time. The same things was done for the classes. Now the Slytherin shared House responsibility with Dan Jenkins, the Physical Defense teacher and Aurélie Durand, the French Transfiguration teacher. Jenkins was unnerving, always cheerful, even on Monday mornings... something which had led several members of the school to wonder if the man was really human. This enthusiasm was usually getting on the Potion Master's nerves, but he knew that under this facade, the man was implacable, which was the only reason why he tolerated him. Durand was bearable, quite cool, she had an air around herself which screamed control and authority,



and above all she was quiet. So to sum it up, Severus had had quite a tiring day, spent teaching, helping with the new wards, working with an advanced class and the Potion group of students. All he wanted was a nice nap, a long bath and a good book; but he seemed that he wasn't about to get any of this.

"Damn the man and his timing," the man muttered before apparating away.

He landed in a large hall, lighted with torches. Most of his "fellow comrades" were there, looking a bit confused. So this wasn't a scheduled meeting...

A door banged open and the Dark Lord entered, robes billowing around him. Snape had to admit that the man knew how to make his entrance. The snake-like man sat on his throne, his snake, Nagini, slithering at his feet and raising its head a little. How Severus would have loved to use the beast's skin in one of his potions!... "Death Eaters. Today, I was attacked."

Mutters followed this declaration.

"Not physically, but magically. Some little sniveling fool manipulated my Magic, but apparently failed to reach his goal. I know the identity of this attacker... Heoc! Malfoy! Nott! Where are your search for the Potter boy?"

The three men knelt before their Lord.

"Nobody know much about his location, he disappeared from his relatives house during the summer and nobody seems to know where he is... He just vanished. Most thought him to be dead by now. He probably is."

"Really, then, explain me how a supposedly dead student, a boy who hadn't even finished his magical education, was able to alter MY magic! But perhaps you're thinking that I imagined it?"

The men stuttered apologies. Snape's mind was racing the boy was alive?! But where was that dratted child then? They had looked everywhere, cast Tracing Charms... Had done everything!



"Find him. He has been training, obviously, otherwise he wouldn't have been able to access my magic.... I want to know where and with whom. I want him dead."

Red eyes scanned the crowd.

"Lucius!"

"Y-Yes my Lord?"

"Put your son to use, yours as well, Crabbe, Goyle, Parkinson, Nott! Have them gather information. Dumbledore should know where the little pest his... perhaps his friends too. And deal with that mudblood Granger girl. She's getting far too noisy for my taste. Do whatever you want, just put her out of the way."

The three men nodded and went back to their fellow Death Eaters, not wanting to be singled out any longer.

"Snape?"

Shuddering ever so slightly, the Potion Master took a few steps forwards and bowed to the Dark Lord.

"Yes, my Lord?"

"Your expertise will be needed for the accomplishment of my plans."

"I'm honored by such a task."

This groveling was sickening, but necessary.

"You should be, Severus. I will also need you for something else... Approach."

The Potion Master walked slowly to the throne, his gut instinct going haywire.

"I want you to spy on the old man... Report his every words to me."

"Yes, my Lord."



"Did I allow you to speak?!"

Severus Snape chose to remain silent, not wanting to anger the man more than he already was.

"The fool must now where the brat his... Well, I want your report every two days and to be sure you won't lie, I've designed this."

Before Severus could react, the Dark Lord had placed a small onyx disc on his neck. The man bit down a scream as he felt it dug in his neck.

"Interesting device, isn't it? I'll have to reward Hopkins for this recorder..."

"Y-Yes my Lord." Snape stammered a bit.

"Out, now, and remember Severus, you can't escape me now..."

The DeathEaters scuttled out, quite relieved to escape their master wrath. Snape apparated away to Hogsmeade before changing to his Animagus form, a bat, and flying to Hogwart. He remembered the day he had found out his Animagus form... Black had had a field day...

Within ten minutes, he was on Hogwarts grounds. Changing back to his human form, he strode in the Hall and up to Albus' office.

As he entered, he saw Albus rummaging through one his numerous drawers, muttering.

"Severus, enter, enter," he said without looking up, something which unnerved the teacher greatly. He stepped in and sat at the desk.

Taking a quill, he wrote a few words before sliding the paper on the desk and placing him in front of Albus.

"Haha!" exclaimed said headmaster, straightening up, "I thought I had lost them... Lemon Drops?" he offered.

Rolling his eyes, he pointed to the paper.



"What?..." Albus started to read: "Oh, well! I wanted to talk to you about a job, Dan Jenkins is going to teach the most advanced students of his class fencing, and he had asked me to find someone who would accept to teach it with him. I immediately thought of you. With your education and... well."

Albus looked at him with a twinkle in his eyes.

" Well, I might..."

"Thank you Severus, I was sure you would accept. Now, I'm sorry, but I've got to leave for a little while. Aurelie asked me if I could help her with a family matter... Apparently, her nephew Tomas seemed convinced that he had seen a Phoenix-nest on the edge of the Forest and his adamant to go and see it for himself."

"I'll leave you then." Snape nodded at the implicit words and left.

The man headed to his dungeons and after a quick shower fell on his bed, only to be woken up in the morning by a chirping owl, who lost a few feathers because of a grumpy, not-a-morning-person professor who didn't like to be woken up by chirping birds.

[illegible]

Hermione was busy, really busy, trying to force the dates of the Goblin rebellions in her best friend head.

"1483 ?"

## "Hmm... Death of Odric the Pacific?"

"No, Battle of Durkan. 1720?"

## "Rise of Othzen?"

"Defeat of Uldan Bigfeet by Karb Wolftooth. 18..."

"Alright, stop here Hermione, I'm not going to learn one more date."

"But Ron! The OWLs are in a week."



She now had a distressed look on her face.

"I know Hermione, you've said it about twenty times today."

It was lunch time and both of them having finished a little sooner were studying... Well Hermione was quizzing her friend who was looking longingly at an apple pie.

Due to the chaos outside the OWLs had been postponed to the third week of July. All the students were to stay at school during the holidays, only those whose family hadn't gone under Fidelius, or were living over seas, could leave. The transport was assured by Portkeys, special ones: they could be used as many times you wanted and were bringing the students to the Salem School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Hogwarts was slowly becoming the only place for refugees, as England was inexorably falling under the Dark Lord's domination.

The man had planned it well, undermining most of the defensive organizations or infiltrating those who held power. When he made his move, everything crumbled, leaving the magical world and the Muggle one in shambles: two institutions survived: Hogwarts and Gringotts.

The Muggle world was doing better. At the beginning, the attack had been dismissed as massive terrorist acts. But as more and more towns or villages were targeted, the Ministry was forced to reveal itself to the Muggles leaders. A special unit was created to deal with this but the public was kept in the dark for the first months, then slowly, through the media, Muggles were familiarized with the idea of Magic and finally a few weeks ago, the British Prime Minister had no choice but to reveal the truth as Voldemort launched several attacks. The Dark Lord had also started to spread his control over other European countries, using the same tactics. France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and some others like Holland, Belgium, Austria, were targeted. The Ministry was trying to slow Voldemort down while shipping the Muggles away, or hiding them, but the process was long and the attacks were intensifying.



Hogwarts had now become the symbol of the resistance against Voldemort, the "beacon of light", the "world's hope" as it was designed by journalists.

The school had been expanded and was now hosting most of the resistance forces: the Unspeakables, the surviving Aurors, the Order, and the VWF, the Voluntary Wizarding Forces. The students of Beauxbatons and Durmstrang had been integrated to the Hogwarts Houses and classes. Slowly the students above fourth year had been shaped as fighters and were for the majority integrated in a junior Order.

Dumbledore was sitting at the High table and scanning the Hall, looking at those particular teenagers, no, young people, those who had been bestowed as the Lost Generation. This saddened the old headmaster. Youth shouldn't be learning how to fight, how to kill. They shouldn't know the fear for your life, the despair, the disillusion... Their only preoccupations should be their studies, their friends, parties... not Defense, Strategy, Fighting, Death. His eyes lingered on those who had become unofficial leaders: Miss Chang. The girl had immersed herself in this, in Cedric's memory, most thought, she brought the Ravenclaw intellect with her and steel-hard determination. Then young Zabini, a surprise for everyone, but more than a few Slytherins were proving to great assets to the fight. He had the ruthlessness and the cunning mind of the Slytherin, as well as the grim determination to reach the goals he had fixed, showing the right image of what this house should have been. The Weasley twins: those who managed to bring some joy in the school, even in their creations were now dedicated to the fight. Many fought them to be honorary Slytherin, seeing the pure ingenuity of their inventions. Miss Bones and Mr Fintch-Fletchey. Those two started to date a few months ago and offered support to the younger ones: an attentive ear, comfort, but will, once they had chosen to do something they would do it. And finally the remaining members of the Gryffondor Trio: Ron Weasley, the epitome of Gryffondor with its qualities and flaws, and young miss Granger, the logic, the cool head. Those last two, maybe because of Harry's memory, or because of their numerous adventure had slowly become those everyone was sort of looking up to, when things were getting too hard. They sort of held Harry's reminder, a hope to which many clang to.



Yes a sad time, if those who should be innocent and carefree were now engrossed in fighting... Dumbledore was worried for the future, for those children. If what Miss Granger had found out was true, then Dark times were coming. He sighed.

"Where are you Harry?..."

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

## What did you think of it?

Anyway, thanks to all of you for reviewing this chapter.

Now on little info: Harry will come back to the wizarding world in about four chapters.

To apologise for the wait I'll give you an insight of what to expect in the next chapter:

## Garth meets his punishment, ass-kicking...

talk involving Dragons, masters, mentors...

arrival in Horevald

Hope this will please you...

Thanks again!

ER

## h m

# Mario Reding

# JasonPotter

Oxi-Nu

# Ueshiba

maria



jessica

jpz

crazy one

shreve

Jake

mercurygirl

Elessar

jedifanatic

SSSRoaB

THE-PENGUIN2

philip Camsa

athenakitty : If it goes how I've planned it, Harry should be back to the wizarding world in about four chapters.

Sylvanus Snape : Good French.

Sami Athelia Hall : Well you noticed a lot of thing... Well as for the similarities between the names, it's merely due to the fact that I love this type of sounds... I'm strange, I know. But I'm impressed you noticed it...

Phoenix Flight : Ell I don't want to fall in an all too powerful Harry type of story, where he commands everybody... I want to keep him as "normal" as possible meaning that he's still young and that no matter how powerful he is, he doesn't have the experience others have.. Anyway, you'll see more of Demenor's reactions in the next chapter.

Rain Warrior : thanks for telling.

Prd2bAmerican



peach-muffin90

Sailor-Knight Shadowstar

mik0217

Cerberis

Lady Shang

crazyfanfictionfanatic

tnycool

kathy

Jen-Jen3

tez

David M. Potter

Silver Blaze: You'll learn more about Voldy soon., More voldy interaction, Hermione, Ron and Hogawarts... Without forgetting Sirius, Snape...

water drifter

Ganymade

Dragon Tamer47

SarahRPotter

Satoshi a.k.a. HeeroYuyZ

Kat53 : Well this should have answered your question... This fic will continue up to sixth year. Then I think it will end and I might write a sequel, I've a whole idea in my head but I'll have to see if I've time enough to write.

Laterose



ambookworm247

Abby : Not all of my chapters were betaed, or I didn't have the time to post the beataed version... Sorry, but it will be taken care soon.

ccs rox

Kalorna Enera

Alexsis Potter-Snape

birthday candles

BoltLightning

avidreader: thanks for your comments, it'll help me improve my writing. Anyway, I understand your critic about the Hogwarts' characters. For now I've placed Hogwarts on a secondary plan and the limelight on Teneb and Harry. I chose to tell what was happening on a regular basis to prevent a long explanation of what had happened once Harry came back. The Hogwarts' characters will be more developped in future chapters as the action will then take place in both the elfish and human worlds... Hope this explain the lack of depth of the other characters.

Elea

JerseyGirl03

LeopardDance

Saruman the White

Kemenran

Kathleen

Larissa

Aphinas



Joe I have a yahoo group, if you want to join it. Each time I update a chapter I'm warning the group.

trunksgrl182

Right-Hand woman of The Great Potato (TGP)

Oliversgurl

Danigirl

vsd2oc

howling wolf1

Rachel A. Prongs

apple reaper

Lady FoxFire

maggie

Cr1Ms0nD3v1L

Nightwalker

Illustrious Sorrow

Braindrain

FaerieDust

Lucy Fair You'll see the fox in the next chapter, promise...

rayvern

Illucia

Estrella de la Tarde : Really, I'll be sure to address him to you...

Energeezzer



neha

Blake

Fate

chris-warren876

OrionTheHunter : Very well, thanks for asking I got an average of 17/20, but I couldn't enter the school I wanted, They were already too many people from the region of the school who came there and they refused people from the other regions... But I'm still very pleased with my results...

Ice Lupus

NasserPotter

chaser1

Arizosa : He'll get it

coriel

gaul1

Ashanka

Arsenal

B0B

Vampire Child

Animagiman

Nealsgurl

HavenKane

Haven GY



dmmason03

Ihire Wing AKA Lady Phoenix

Pakerin Pyros

Bean

Eaiva le Fay

Sharahzad

atalante You'll know about Teneb's family's reactions in the next chapter.

Demon Child

Eriee

firelizard720

smilez

Dragon Phoenix

Dark-Angel6661

Chrispy

JadedSecrets

PlatinumPhoenix

KC

lollipozz

Angelis1

Angie

Skysong1



goodhiplollypop

GrimmyD

Calli ori snape

potter-man1

eric

Rei

lovewildfire

MHS02

Frankie the Wonder Wiener Dog

Anora

stayblue

Jordan



## **Chapter Sixteen**

I will

The Dragons parted to let one of their own to pass. Upon seeing the bonded of the human, the stands fell into pandemonium. The same thought was ringing in every riders' head: How could he be chosen?

SILENCE!!

All eyes turned to the Dragon who was the cause of this excitement. Nobody could look away from the majestic creature, his regal posture, his golden scales shinning in the light, his eyes blazing.

All quieted.

Are you questioning our judgement? His roar echoed in the Den.

Silence met his shout. Seeing that, the Sowaroc turned to Harry and green eyes met rainbow colored ones. Harry had never felt like this before... A mind met his own and for a few seconds, he felt complete, like a part of him he had not been aware of had been missing and was now back. The power was amazing too, it felt like magic itself. The presence dug in his memories and Harry tensed. At this the entity sent comforting thoughts and opened to him, letting the young wizard watch his memories. He was Rexeran... a Sowaroc. He saw flashes of the long, long life of the Dragon, his childhood, his companions... his fights, too... Then it stopped.

Hello Astyan. His voice alone was laced with power.

Rexeran...

I told you we would meet again, young one. His tone was amused. As I told you that should you be attacked again, the culprits wouldn't escape unscathed. Gae healed your own injuries, as a favor, so you won't be handicapped. But...

Let me and Teneb deal with them first... Then you'll take whatever measures you want.



Are you sure?

Yes. But are you sure of your own choice? You know of my intentions and of the fact that I won't stay for the second year of training...

And I'll help.

No more was said, as it wasn't needed. They separated and Harry felt a tingling sensation on his right temple, warning him of the apparition of his mark. A smile spread on his face. He had done it! He was a rider.

*You did it Harry!* Teneb sounded extremely pleased

*Yes, thank Gae for healing me.*

*She said you're welcome.*

*So, what is going to happen now?*

*Well, Demenor is going to thank the Dragons...* Teneb paused.

*And?*

*Well, normally there is a party...*

*Where is the problem?*

*It's taking place at Horevald, with the allegiances at the end...* The young elf braced himself for Harry's explosion.

No. Way. Harry's eyes were narrowed and a frown was etched on his face.

*But...*

*No but. Out of curiosity, what does it entail?*

*Basically you swear to protect and serve the people and the King, to answer his call.* Teneb was looking warily at his friend, fearing him a bit.



No bloody way. Teneb knew from Harry's tone that he was deadly serious. So he decided to try a new approach.

*Harry... I know you don't like my people very much...*

*That's the year's understatement, spat Harry*

*And I'm not proud of them myself, but I'd like you to meet my family and Celen.*

*Why?* Harry was curious, and Teneb decided to try to take advantage of that.

*First for emotional support and for me to see if my people is only made of narrow-minded bigots.*

There was a pause, as Harry seemed to consider the option.

*What will you do if this is the case?*

*I don't know... I hope it won't come to this point.* Teneb wouldn't say it out loud as he knew that Harry was aware of his fear. He could sense his friend thinking about his request.

*Fine, I'll come. But mark my word, I won't take this whole human-bashing anymore. If they can't respect me for who I am, they will respect me for what I am.*

*You can't ask for less,* nodded Teneb. They ended their talk, and became aware of their surroundings again.

People were shouting, others were looking quiet dazed. Garth and co were being restrained by the other Daryns. Xjahl and Chrisianne were getting hysterical. Garth was struggling against Kobalt, trying to lunge at the Dragons. The Magis seemed to be completely out of his mind, he was shouting, yelling, crying. Vlad and Ribor after some struggle and simply fell into shock and were now laying on the ground, dully looking in front of them. Opheria came to Kobalt's rescue and both of them managed to subdue the Magis. Demenor was trying to establish back the calm required for this kind of ceremony, to no avail.



Garth caught Harry's eyes and the young man could see the hatred burning in the orange orbs.  
"You! It's YOUR FAULT!"

Escaping Kobalt and Opheria, he unsheathed his sword and motioned to strike at Harry. But before he could come close to the dark-haired teenager, a golden body was now standing between him and his prey. He looked up and was paralyzed by the furious and scornful glare of the Sowaroc.

I promised I would deal with you, once my bonded was done with you... but try something that foolish and I won't leave you this honor.

He then turned and walked to Harry, leaving a trembling Garth behind.

The stands were still in chaos. Sighing, Harry turned to Teneb.

*Let's calm them... I want to get out of here.*

*Alright. By the way, why are you keeping your elemental aura up? It's eye-catching, plus I like to remind them of their failure.*

Teneb shook his head, smiling slightly.

*Let's go.*

Together, they cast a silencing charm on themselves. Then, Harry, followed by Teneb, let his element flare, before yelling at the top of their voices:

"SHUT UP!!"

This silenced everybody efficiently. Knowing his friend, Teneb was aware that he had to talk.

"Demenor?"

Still seeming unsure about what to do, the riders' leader managed to collect himself. With a trembling voice he addressed the Dragons.

"We thank the Dragons and accept their judgement, as their wisdom is well-known. May these youths bring honor to this institution."



Harry snorted at these words.

The Dragons nodded and after glancing at Rexeran and Gae, left. The Sowaroc looked at Harry.

Astyan? He asked, mentally.

Yes?

There is a few things you need to learn about me. Gae and myself are members of the Elders, which means that we're part of the Draconian Council and some of the leaders of our race. With this come responsibilities that I can't avoid.

I understand your situation, don't worry...

Thank you Astyan... now Gae and I have to talk to a few people...

So have I.

They shared a few minutes of silence

Astyan?

Yes?

Don't kill them.

I can return the advice.

They smiled. Teneb who had been watching the exchange suppressed a shudder; he didn't have to ask to know what they were talking about.

"Harry?" His voice was really low and Harry barely caught his words.

"What?"

"Count me in."

The grateful look Harry shot him was enough to assure him he had made the right choice.



Both youths walked briskly to the five distraught Daryns and stopped near them. Garth looked up.

"What are you doing here? Come to gloat?... How can you..."

"Walk?" Teneb cut him. "None of your concern, but it's not thanks to you! As to what we are doing here, you should know."

Teneb unsheathed his sword and after drawing an half circle in front of him, pointed it at Garth's chest, drawing gasps from the crowd. Demenor, Kario, Teneb's mentor and Zeld, Garth's mentor.

"I, Teneb, son of Doryan and Ylesa, challenge Garth to a Duel of Honor."

Harry stepped forwards and repeated Teneb's actions, then spoke up.

"I, Harry Potter, son of James and Lily Potter, challenge Garth to a Duel of Honor and Blood."

Together, they planted their swords in the grounds. By this time, the three mentors had reached them.

"What's the meaning of this?"

Demenor was trying desperately to regain some control.

"Don't interfere," snapped Harry, not even bothering to look at them.

"Why?" dared to ask Kario to his former charge.

"This doesn't concern you ," Teneb said softly, "you made it clear that we weren't under your care anymore."

Kario looked down, avoiding the young elf's fierce gaze.

"Teneb, I..." he stopped, seeing the look on his ex-Daryn.

"If you're so eager to know, ask the Dragons!" interrupted Harry, before focusing back on Garth., "we await the challenged one's answer."



Shakily, Garth placed his hands on both handles.

"I, Garth, son of Jaris and Ilia, accept the challenges"

He extracted the swords and handed them back. Teneb smirked at him.

"You have one week to chose your time, place, weapon and seconds."

At this Chrisianne, who seemed to have gathered her wits back, stepped forwards.

"I will be his second, if he accepts."

Garth nodded, apparently relieved. Harry turned to Teneb.

"And you?"

Teneb shrugged, but before he could have said anything, a voice interrupted him.

"If he'll have me, I will."

Both teenagers turned to face Opheria, who was now standing close to them. They narrowed their eyes suspiciously at her.

"I know that my behavior was far from civil towards you, but I'd like to make amends..."

*Harry?*

*Well, I don't like it a lot, but you need a second, so I think she one of the lesser evils of the lots.*

*Yeah...*

Aloud, this time, Teneb gave his answer:

"I accept your offer."

Opheria nodded. Then the young Athar turned to his friend.



"Harry, who'll be your second?"

"Well, since it's unlikely for me to find someone who would stand by me, besides you, I won't have..." he was cut in mid-sentence.

"I know that none of us deserves it, but if you accept, I'll be your second."

Shocked faces turned to Kobalt as Harry eyed him.

"There is nothing to gain from this, no profit. Why then?" Harry asked, seeming a bit doubtful.

"So I can look in my mirror tomorrow morning," answered the Elemental.

There was a tensed silence, Harry was gauging Kobalt trying to figure if the Elemental was being truthful.

*Teneb? What do you think? You know him better than I do.*

*Go for it. Kobalt has never been known for being dishonest.*

Harry pondered over this dilemma for a few more seconds before making up his mind. After all he needed someone and it wasn't like Kobalt would have to take part in the duel.

"I accept."

Kobalt nodded gravely, Garth who had been talking with Chrisianne approached.

"Human, I'll fight you here in an hour, hand to hand. As for you," he pointed at Teneb, " I'll meet you just after, Magic only."

Harry and Teneb glanced at each other, small smirks on their lips.

"We accept these terms," started Harry.

"And will meet you here in an hour," finished Teneb.

They turned and motioned to Opheria and Kobalt to follow them. They called their horses and left a stunned arena behind them.



"I don't know if I understand it myself," muttered Harry. Louder, he continued. "Well, That's it..... Anyway, I wanted to ask you something, Opheria. I know you're not my second, but if you feel Garth using his Magis abilities to tamper the Duel, warn Teneb."



The young girl acquiesced.

"Good, now I'm going to warm up a bit, we have about half an hour left."

"How are we going to..."

"Element traveling," answered Teneb.

Wordlessly, Harry moved away and took off his weapons, his robes and his shoes. He stretched and then started his warm up. Arxeren had taught him ancient body-fighting methods, similar to martial arts, only more focused on the body. It's creator had called it Blade Art, and named himself and the other members of his group Artists. Their teaching aimed to steel every parts of the body, thus transforming it into a human blade. It was a mental and physical trick which was reached through numerous series of movements and exercises. Among these, one was destined to warm the body, warm the muscles and bring the body to his full-strength. Thanks to his guardian, Harry had managed to learn four series, in which the warm-up was one. Mastering the whole course would take him years but he was determined to go through it. He was aware of Opheria and Kobalt's eyes on him, but ignored them.

The two youths were currently gawking at the slender and gracious form of the young wizard, breath caught in their throat at the sight.

A cough pulled them out of their reverie. Startled they met the amused face of Teneb. The elf smiled. Harry had always this effect the first time.

"Well, I'm going to practice a bit on my own. Do whatever you want for the mean time."

During the following twenty minutes, both boys readied themselves under the awed eyes of the two former Daryns. Finally, as Harry ended his last series, he saw his friend enjoying himself, joyously blasting rocks.

*Enjoying yourself?*



*Yes, why?*

*I was thinking that, since we'll leave tonight and that, in my case, I won't come back, the second year of training be damned, we could go say good bye to Terio and thank him for his help.*

*Great! Let's go!*

*You're sure you don't want to keep on blasting rocks?*

*Shut up! Anyway, what about?... He pointed his chin to Opheria and Kobalt who were watching them curiously.*

*We have no choice but to take them with us.*

*Alright...*

They walked to their seconds, grabbed their arm, while ordering their horses to go back to the headquarters and to take the mounts of the two other teenagers with them.

Surprised, the two youths started to struggle.

"Stop this, we're only to go see a friend of us before the duel," snapped Harry.

"A dwarf," added Teneb.

"A dwarf? But there's no dwarf..." Before Kobalt could finish his sentence, they were both gone in a whirl of fire and wind.

They reappeared in front of the entrance of the dwarfs' caves. Harry leaned forwards and whispered the password so that no one could hear him. Once the hole was uncovered, they stepped in and walked for about a minute before meeting a dwarf. Teneb signaled for Opheria and Kobalt to stay behind as Harry took a few steps towards the man.

"Strength and wealth, Anok."

"Strength and wealth Harry. What brings you here?"



"Do you know where I can find Terio?"

"In the Forge."

"Thanks. I'm sorry but could you open a shortcut for us, we're in quite a hurry."

"No problem."

Anok put his hand on a wall and muttered a few words in an harsh language. An hole started to appear to finally form a tunnel.

"Right, here you are!"

"Thanks a lot Anok, may the gods bring you health, riches and wealth," said Harry, bowing.

"And to you," replied the dwarf, bowing back before leaving.

Harry stepped through the hole, followed by Teneb, Opheria and Kobalt who were staring at everything. Their people weren't as cut from the dwarfs as the elves, but the contact between them were scarce. They entered a vast hot room.

"Harry!"

Terio walked quickly to them and embraced Harry, choking him.

"Good to see you too Terio," said Harry, trying to determine if his ribs were definitively bruised. "Well, I came to say good bye."

Terio's smiling face saddened immediately.

"You bonded then. With who?"

"Rexeran, a ..."

"Sowaroc, I know him..." Terio whistled. "Well done! I bet those leaf-eaters, no offense Teneb, were green with envy..."

"None taken." Teneb knew by now not to take offense of Terio's derisive comment on his race. Moreover he didn't miss the chance to



send some back every time he could. It had become a sort of game between the two of them.

"They were... We won't be able to stay for long, we have an ass to kick."

"An elf?" Terio asked, hopefully.

"No, a Magis, but I have three elves in second place on my ass-to-kick list," he added seeing the disappointed look on his smaller friend's face.

"Good, good, it's been too long since one of these arrogant snobs has been defeated, no offense again."

Terio turned to look at Teneb.

"Well, I never thought I would say that to an elf, but you're Okay, I'm pleased to have met you. Come see me whenever you want."

"Thanks, it's been honor to meet you, Terio," said Teneb, leaning forwards as Terio whispered the passwords in his ear.

As the dwarf straightened up, he noticed Opheria and Kobalt.

"Who are they?"

"Well, they volunteered to be our seconds... this is Opheria, Magis, bonded with?...", started Harry

"Nelán," finished the young woman.

"Alright, and this is Kobalt, Water Elemental, bonded with?..."

"Polath,"

"Good... Well you should go, I'm busy," said Terio, a bit grumpily, but Harry noticed a tear. He shook Teneb's hand, which showed how much he had come to appreciate the elf. Then turned to Harry. "Stay for a minute."

The green-eyed teenager nodded and turned to Teneb.



"We'll wait outside," he answered.

Once they were alone, Terio walked to the raven-haired teenager.

"It's been a pleasure and a honor to know you."

"Same here, It's been a privilege."

There were a few seconds of silence.

"Take this." Terio handed him something which shone in the light of a torch. "I made it myself."

Harry played with the small locket. It was made in copper with bronze and silver ornaments. On the back, a message was carved: "Remember your friends from underneath."

Smiling widely, Harry looked at Terio with tearful eyes.

"You don't know how much it means to me, but I won't need anything to remember you and your people."

"Open it," the dwarf said simply.

Harry obeyed and watched in wonder as a small light went out and started to whirl around his head.

"This is a flame of Sardogh. When you'll want to see us, just ask her. She'll lead you to the closest entrance and you know the passwords. If you want to talk to someone, just say the name and ask. If the person owns a flame, he or she will be able to hear you and answer."

He pointed to his neck where a similar necklace was hanging.

"All the dwarfs have one, you're the first non dwarf to be offered one for decades. I trust you to treat this gift carefully."

He smiled at the shine he saw in Harry's eyes.

The young wizard was speechless. He stared at the locket and couldn't stop a tear from escaping his eye and gliding down his cheek.



"Thanks... Thank you for everything," he whispered, not trusting his voice.

"No need. Now go or you'll be late!"

Harry nodded and started to jog towards the exit.

"Oh! Harry!"

The young wizard turned at Terio's exclamation.

"Take care and crush them."

Harry sent his friend a big grin.

**"I will!"**

Both of them were sporting wide smile as they parted.

Harry ran full speed and reached Teneb and the others in no time.

"Forty seconds left Harry," warned the elf.

"Let's go now!" Harry answered, grabbing the arm of Kobalt and dissolving in twirls of fire; quickly imitated by his blood brother who took Ophelia's hand and disappeared in a small cyclone.

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Meanwhile, in the Den, everything was going crazy.

The riders were trying to understand what had just happened. The masters seemed to be in shock. Demenor was doing his best to regain some control over the crowd, the mentors had approached their Daryns and those whose charge had been rejected were trying to comfort them and find out why!

The two remaining Dragons were watching this with something akin to amusement in their eyes.

Finally Demenor had enough: he shot loud fireworks in the air, whose explosions were reverberated by the stands.



"Now I want all the riders back to their posts, four of them to go warn King Sylaeen of our arrival in two hours due to unexpected events. The masters will go fetch their files, while the mentors will bring their charges back to their dorm. They'll leave some people with them before coming back here. I want all the masters and mentors here in ten minutes so we can try to make some light of the recent events."

Nothing that wasn't expected to happen... Rexeran cut in, stepping up.

"I count on your participation to help us."

I will... Be sure that I will.

As everyone hurried away, Demenor recalled the past events... He replayed the memories in his mind.

Harry and Teneb had arrived the last. Apparently they had decided to pull a show: both of them had been surrounded by their elements and hadn't been touching the ground. One by one, the Daryns had bowed before each statue. Demenor remembered having been a little surprised at the lack of light emitted for Garth and his friend, but now it was explained. Then it had been their turn. They had approached together, something which wasn't normally allowed. Effilin had been about to stop them but Demenor had by now understood it was no use to try and stop those two when they set their minds on something, in particular when one of them was a Fire user. Then had come the first of the several shocks Demenor's heart was to bear. The light had been incredible, even if divided in two, it had still remained amazing. And once it had faded, he had remembered his surprise at seeing two magical Dragons. He had always known that Doryan's son had the potential to bond with one, but none of the others seemed promising enough... But maybe they weren't here to bond... after all there was always more Dragons than Daryns. He had taken their marks away and he couldn't repress a shiver as he recalled Harry's eyes. They would haunt him for a long time. So much defiance... After their talk, Demenor had realized that his only remaining link with the young human was Teneb. The Daryns had turned and knelt and the moment Demenor always waited for had come. At first it went smoothly and soon five Daryns were bonded. It was now Garth's turn. The young Magis was standing proudly under the scrutiny of a Dusker. Minutes



passed in silence and the leader remembered having then thought that something had to be wrong. The blow had finally come: Garth had been deemed unworthy. Demenor remembered the astonishment on everyone's face. Saying that he had been surprised was an understatement; the youth had been highly praised by all the masters and had even been proposed as a likely candidate for the Athar post. But this hadn't marked the end of this day's surprises. As the Dusker confirmed his choice, Garth took his sword and lunged at him. Demenor rose to his feet. Had the boy lost his mind!! Before he could have stepped in, a jet of flame had thrown the Magis back. All the eyes had turned to Harry but his words had only confused everyone more. But what had chilled Demenor had been the hatred laced in the voice, the scorn.

The ceremony had resumed itself and to Demenor's stupor all of Garth's friends had been refused one by one. By the end, Demenor had been getting desperate had been about to jump in the arena to ask for explanations. Five Daryns had been refused! Five! And as powerful as Harry had proved to be, Nerthor had been categorical, the human didn't have the mental capacity to bond. So half of the Daryns were going to be rejected... Never before had something like this taken place. Sure a few Daryns had been rejected before, but never more than one out of ten! Why?! Teneb's bonding had gone well, but the headmaster hadn't been able to suppress a pang of guilt as the Dragon judging him spoke of disillusion. He then had watched as a Windscand had approached the human, readying to see an other rejection, but this one had been predictable... Imagine then the shock of the spectators as Harry had been deemed worthy and as the draconian judgement had been nothing but praises.

People had started to get agitated as the Dragons seemed to discuss over something, there had been too many shocks, most of them which had gone against their deepest beliefs. Suddenly a booming voice had announced his choice, thus sending the stands into chaos. It couldn't be possible! A human couldn't be chosen by a Sowaroc.

The following events were blurred... Harry's bonding, the duels' declarations, the choices of the seconds... What in heavens' name had Garth done to deserve this?



The return of the mentors and the masters prevented Demenor from losing himself in unanswered questions. With a wave of his hand, he conjured a large table where they all took place. Once everyone was seated he spoke.

"Now, what, in Lunai's name, happened?"

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The masters and mentors looked at each other, not daring to speak.

" Let me rephrase this : hand me your files and tell me all you know about Harry, without taking the ceremony's events into account." Seeing the look of confusion on a few faces, he added, "the human."

One by one, they made their report, their comments ranging from clumsy to unskilled and worthless. This only added to the confusion of Demenor.

"How can we have missed something like this?" He slumped back in his chair. "And what about Garth?" He turned toward Zeld. "If there was something going on, I wasn't aware of it. I just knew that young Garth thought that the hum... Harry was a waste of time, a burden, a jester. This doesn't deserve a Duel," said Demenor, his brows furrowed.

No, but attempted murder, intentional wounding, poisoning, injuries given with the aim of handicapping, verbal assault, threats, mental abuse which led to suicide attempt, are enough to earn Harry the right of a Duel. Rexeran said.

Stunned faces turned to the golden Dragon.

And in Teneb's case: insults, wounding with the intention of handicapping, poisoning, threats earned him his right, added Gae.

"M-Murder... Sui-Suicide?" stammered Demenor.

Rexeran ignored him and turned to Nerthor.

# You!



The elf jumped, startled out of his daze.

"Y-Yes?"

You said that Harry showed a total lack of ability in your field, didn't you?

"Yes-s."

But yesterday, he managed to enter a trance?

"We-Well, he must have fa-faked it," Nerthor was cowering under the Sowaroc's gaze.

Which would explain why I was able to bond with him... Rexeran didn't let anybody cut him off, and the fact that he can use telekinesis, that he is gifted with a slight empathy and telepathy? He paused a bit. Just one question: Who is Harry?

As no one dared to answer, he turned his reptilian head towards Nerthor.

What is his race?

"Hu-Human."

Good, you're not as dumb as I thought... And for whom were designed your teaching methods?

Nerthor seemed to think over it for a few moments before answering, slightly paler and sweating a little.

"Elves, Ma-Magis and Elementals..."

Not for humans? piped in Gae.

"Not for humans," repeated Nerthor in a whisper, looking horrified as he realized his mistake.

You're still able to think after all... Rexeran was bitter. You were chosen to be riders! We entrusted you with the education of the Daryns. Your behavior can nearly be considered as a breaking of



your oath. Even if it was being motivated by your beliefs, you shouldn't have let it blind your judgement! I can't and won't tolerate the extents your stupid prejudices and narrow-mindedness pushed you! You are riders, not bigot commoners! Instead of adapting to the situation, you blocked him .

"Why should we have adapted?" asked Sarwin. "He was a wand-waver, one of those silly magicians."

In case you hadn't registered this fact, humans are not elves. They don't have natural magical canals, if they want to do wandless magic, they have to first draw power from themselves out, to build some canals, something which is quite difficult... You're masters, you shouldn't have overlooked this basic fact!!

At the alarming reports your bonded sent to the council, and before the extent of your foolish behavior, it was decided that the bonds would be temporary severed. We will stay here to help when it's needed but that's all, cut Gae, seeing that Rexeran was getting angrier and angrier. You need to understand the damages you caused. You endangered both his and your worlds by your actions and I hoped it's not too late to correct everything...

"What do you mean?" asked a mentor.

We'll do some history later, but now we'll tell you this story, from Harry's point of view, so you can see for yourselves what you did, growled the golden Dragon.

An orb appeared, floating in the air, nacre and iridescent.

This contains memories I gathered for your benefit, now watch and let's it be a lesson...

The orb expanded, taking everyone in its folds and scenes started to display before them. Slowly Harry's life since his arrival on the island unfolded before their eyes. Only the main parts, excluding those that didn't concern them, such as everything related to Terio, previous meetings with the Dragons, Arxeren, and even the true extents of Harry and Teneb's powers. Some of the memories were from Teneb's point of view. But the worst part was that they could feel the feelings



connected with the events. Elves were by nature, empathic creatures, but this gift could become a drawback as it could increased the feeling to the point of blindness. However, here, it enhanced all the emotions coming with the memories: despair, loneliness, helplessness, cold, hope, hurt, betrayal, defiance, deep anger and desire for revenge. Disillusion and pain at losing his role-models was radiating from Teneb's parts.

Finally after thirty minutes of watching (in reality, they had stayed an hour in the orb, but one of its features was that the time was going two times slower inside than outside), the orb darkened and faded away.

A stunned silence followed. Demenor was a sickly shade of grey and was starring straight in front of him, his eyes empty, apparently lost in his thoughts.

Suddenly Effilin exploded.

"This is a pack of lies! Nothing is true, lies, filthy lies, made by filth, by human scum!" His breathing was hard and his face a strange mix of puce, scarlet, blue and white with small hints of purple. "This human is nothing but a fraud! He was the worst student I had the misfortune to teach! During the whole year, he proved his complete disability at fighting, but I know from my colleague that it was a common occurrence. Not only was he totally ignorant of our arts, but his learning capacities were null. I don't know how he managed to trick everyone but he's nothing but a slimy fraud!!" By the end of his little speech, he was yelling.

A fraud? A FRAUD!! Rexeran seemed to be enraged. If there are frauds, you are! He was chosen! It was your DUTY as rider to teach him.

"Why, he was clearly a mistake, no human had ever been riders, they can't, they're weak, mentally and physically!" spat Sarwin.

It's never a mistake if someone is chosen. Human hadn't been for a long time because it's rare that they managed to gain enough power by their fifteenth birthday. Their powers usually reached their peaks later. Several humans were not chosen because of this and now have







Teneb looked around him and noted Garth's absence.

"We await the challenged one's arrival." As he said that, Chrisianne and Garth appeared in a whirl of wind. The Magis looked more confident.

"Are you ready?" he asked, "or are you going to chicken out, like the coward you are?"

Harry didn't fall for this.

"I am," he replied calmly. "Let's begin this."

They faced each other, none of them wearing any weapons. Their seconds were behind them, and the people had gathered around, forming a wide circle. They were waiting for the other's move, circling each other slowly, looking for the smallest detail, the tiniest hint of a weakness. Suddenly Garth lunged at Harry. Taking the Magis' arm, he used his momentum to flip him over his shoulder, thus sending him to the floor.

"That's all? Surely you can do better than that..." taunted the teenager.

Growling furiously, Garth aimed his fist at Harry's face, but felt as if he had just hit a brick wall as he was blocked, only centimeters away from his destination.

"I feel like fighting a little girl..."

Furious, Garth jumped back before launching a series of kicks. It went on like this for a few minutes, Garth was throwing attacks after attacks and Harry was just blocking or dodging, without any apparent effort.

"It's getting really boring..."

"Coward," panted Garth, "You don't even try to hit me, you're too afraid to do so."



"If you really want that..." Suddenly Harry's demeanor changed completely, gone was the defensive strategy. He kicked Garth two times in the stomach, knocking the breath out of him. As his opponent doubled up in pain, he threw an uppercut to his jaw, followed by a spin kick in the ribs who sent him to the floor.

Garth was sprawled on the floor, his breathy heavy and ragged.

"Get up, I'm not done with you."

The legs a bit wobbly, the Magis stood up and tried to attack Harry. He was down a minute later with two black eyes and a broken nose.

"Up!"

"Why don't you finish me, I'm down, why don't you take advantage of that?"

Harry approached, his eyes blazing.

"I'm not you! I have morals, honor! And I don't hit somebody who is down!" he spat.

"What's why you're going to lose!"

Garth caught his leg and pulled on it, sending Harry to the floor and getting up but as he leaned to hit Harry, he received Harry's two feet in his stomach, sending him over the teenager's head, who rolled back to his feet.

"You're nothing Garth..."

"And you will be too!"

In a last resort measure, he unleashed his power, trying to fry Harry's abilities.

Ophelia elbowed Teneb who cried out in Harry's mind.

*Look out!*

Surprised, Harry barely dodged the afflux of power.



Apparently there had been one thing Garth hadn't known about a Duel.

Whoever broke the rules stated by the challenged one, would suffer, first a backlash of what he had done, then a loss which could be permanent of his powers.

Indeed, the Magis was soon writhing in pain.

"Do you yield?"

"Ne-Never."

"Nobody can help you until you do, but if you don't, then get on with the fight," Harry said coldly.

His opponent managed to go back on his feet but was trembling violently.

With a disgusted face, Harry hit him in his stomach again, then hit him on the back of his neck, knocking him out. Harry turned to Chrisianne.

"On his behalf, do you yield or do you wish to continue this fight?"

With hatred-filled eyes, Chrisianne seemed to evaluate the situation. On one hand she was dying to kill the human, but she knew that was she obliged to follow the rule, she wouldn't be able to do so, moreover, she'd have to go against Teneb, now, as Garth wasn't fit to fight anytime soon. She quickly made her mind.

"I yield."

Harry nodded, but seeing the look of Teneb, he knew she was in for a hard time. He sat near Kobalt, looking at Teneb as he set to pummel Chrisianne to the ground, firing curse after curse.

"Thanks Opheria," he said, coolly.

"It's only fair..."



They said nothing more. Harry looked at the people watching Teneb avidly. Harry winced as Teneb fired an Illusia Burning spell on her feet. She started to saunter. This spell made you think that a part of your body was on fire. Turning away from the fight, or should he say massacre, he focused on the masters and mentors... He smirked, they would have a nice surprise in a few days and Harry knew he would be far away when his little, should he say revenge, would unfold. He stared at Effilin. He was going to learn the true meaning of shame. Harry would take care of Sarwin and Nerthor later.

Finally, Teneb blasted the Elemental away. Harry clapped slowly.

"Great job, I loved your Illusia curse..."

"Thanks, your fight was good too," replied Teneb, having thoroughly enjoyed cursing Chrisianne.

"Yeah, a bit basic sadly."

The young wizard got up and tidied himself a little.

"Well, three more things to do and I'm done with this," he muttered, taking out his sword and walking to Effilin. He stopped a few steps away from the master.

"Let's fight, so that everybody can see who is the fraud."

"I...", Effilin seemed lost..

"Scared?"

This triggered his anger.

"Of you? Never."

He unsheathed his sword and close the distance between him and Harry.

They stared at each other for a few seconds, no one moving.

All of a sudden, Effilin slashed at Harry who parried the blow and immediately returned it. For two minutes they kept on fencing, waiting



for an opening. Effilin's clothes were slowly being ripped in pieces, and soon, the elf was left in some sort of boxers. Then Harry blocked the master's sword, twirled it and sent it flying away... Effilin was now defenseless.

"So, who is the fraud now?" whispered Harry, the point of his sword millimeters from the other's throat.. An hand on his shoulder. The young wizard turned to face his friend.

"Come on Harry, he doesn't even deserve your anger..."

Reluctantly, Harry nodded.

"You're right... Well, I've a little friend to see..."

They both headed out of the Den, followed by every eye.

[illegible]

Harry went straight where he had left the little baby fox. As he hadn't know how long he would be gone, he had put everything needed there for the baby animal.

When he entered, the little fox yipped and ran to the back of the room, hiding himself.

Smiling, Harry approached, kneeled and extended his arm, only to have it bitten.

"Ouch!" He examined the bite.

"Feisty one?"

"Yes." Harry got up and went to piece of tender meat. He took a thin slice then came back to the little fox. Sitting on the floor, he placed the slice in front of him.

"Now, the power of food will demonstrated again."

Sure, after fifteen minutes, a ginger face pointed out of the hideout.

"Here you are little troublemaker..."



Intelligent black eyes looked at him uncertainly. This was a stranger and two-leg... But he had food... Finally the food won, and slowly, the little ginger baby came closer. At the same time, Harry was tugging on the slice, slowly pulling it in his lap. Growing more and more confident at the lack of reaction from the two-leg, the little fox put his paws on Harry's legs, sniffing him and above all, smelling the meat.

This two-leg smelt like the one who had brought him here...He had a good scent. The fox started to eat and was so absorbed in it that he didn't notice at first that the two leg was caressing his back. He tensed, ready to bite and run. But the hand kept caressing his fur lightly in a soothing manner. Once he was done with the food, the little fox felt himself falling asleep. Settling himself in the lap of the good-smelling two-leg, he closed his eyes and reached the fox Dreamlands.

"You did well with him... I think he has adopted you."

"Yeah... It seems that I'm his new pillow..."

Teneb smiled.

"What are you going to call him?"

"I think that Lucky will be an appropriate name for our little survivor."

"A fitting name. So you're going to keep him."

"I don't feel like I'm having a choice..."

"He's a strong one, and from his actual height, I think he'll grow to spectacular size."

"If you say so."

"We have to go, Harry, the King will await us."

"You know that I don't want to go... and don't expect me to swear allegiance to your king."



"I don't expect it. But you can swear the Old Pledge: the promise to come in dire need of help, and to protect innocents."

Harry pondered over this.

"Any kind of innocents?"

"Yes."

"Then I could pledge an oath like this one... innocents in my world are in dire need of help. What are you going to do?"

"It'll depend of the King attitude towards you. If he prove to be open-minded enough to at least accept you as a rider, I will pronounce the usual pledge, but if he doesn't, I swear the Old Pledge."

"Don't illusion yourself: king or not, Elves won't accept my status..."

"I'm still hoping that some will... my parents and Celen."

Harry sent him a doubtful look but drop the subject. Slowly, he took the fox in his arms. The little one woke up, but apparently the five-to-ten-minute nap had been enough for him. He struggled a bit until Harry raised him to is face.

"So, little one, are you coming with me?"

Intelligent black eyes met his own. After a few seconds, the fox approached his nose to Harry and sniffed him again. Apparently happy with what he had smelt, he licked his nose.

"I'll take that as a yes. Now I'll present you to my companion: this is Teneb." Teneb approached his hand and let the small animal smell it. The fox seemed to approve of the elf as he started nibbling his fingers. Harry whistled and Shadow came running. "And this is Shadow." The great stallion approached his nose to the ginger thing his master had in his arm. Understanding from Harry's look and attitude that he'd have to look after this little one.

The two animals stared at each other, gauging... Shadow shook his mane and pressed his head to his master's chest. Harry, taking Lucky



in one hand, petted tenderly the large forehead of his mount, looking in the intelligent eyes and thanking the stallion for having accepted him as his rider.

Having enough of that, little Lucky managed to free himself from Harry and catch Shadow's mane. Somehow he managed to climb up the mane to the withers. Shadow snorted at him.

"A troublemaker?... Come here." Harry conjured a small chain with his other hand and placed it around the fox' neck. "There, this way I'll be able to find you. Now you'll stay in this bag, Okay?" He summoned his bag with all his belongings.

The fox looked at the bag then at him and entered the bag.

"Good boy. Shadow, keep an eye on the bags and Lucky, don't let anyone come too close to them."

A snort from the horse indicated that he had understood and Harry knew that nobody would be able to touch his bag without losing body parts or having some bones broken.

"Teneb, how will our horses be transported?"

"People are going to send them through an Element Portal."

"Alright."

"We should go Harry or we'll be late."

"I'm coming. Just one last thing."

"Be quick."

Harry? Are you going to do it?

Sure, I didn't go through all this trouble to chicken out at the end.

It's going to be sooo fun!

You're worrying me...



By the way, I'm proud of you, Harry. You did very well.

Thank you Arxeren, but I have to thank you for that. Thanks for everything you have done for me.

Well, you're welcome, now what about your little scheme?

In a week, they will feel its effect. It'll last a week, more for certain people.

Well, go now, you're going to be late.

Okay.

Oh! And , Harry?

Yeah?

Don't let them step on you.

I don't intend to.

Harry then sent a little burst of magic, which triggered every spells he laid dormant. Now activated, the timer would delay their effect until next week. A little recording enchantment would assure Harry of seeing their effects.

"I'm ready," he said to Teneb, who had, in the meantime, summoned his own belongings.

They mounted their horses and headed back to the Den. Waiting for them were all the Daryns, the mentors, the masters and Demenor, plus a few riders. Their Dragons were waiting on the other side, with Rexeran and Gae. Everybody's horses were there too, with the belongings of each of their riders tied to the saddle.

As they saw them, the riders accompanying them started to chant and slowly the four elements joined, to open a sort of vortex.

"It's ready, Demenor."

"Good, push the horses through it!"



The people tried to do it, but the horses seemed deadly afraid of the vortex and were starting to panic.

"Oh! For God's Sake! You did it before," yelled Effilin, ready to hit his own, only to be stopped as a hand caught his raised arm.

He turned to see Lienhor.

"Never, hit one of those horse, Effilin," said the master. Then he turned to Teneb and Harry.

"Teneb, Hum- Harry, could you... I mean, could your horses go..."

"First?" finished Harry. "I don't think there is a choice left." He leaned on Shadow, whispering in his ear. The stallion's ears were pointed, showing his attention. After a few seconds, Harry let go and noticed that Teneb had been doing the same with Myst.

The two stallions trotted to the group of scared horses and rounded them, then, Myst in the lead, Shadow in the back to push the reluctant ones, they started to direct them towards the vortex, trotting leisurely. Shadow had to put a few mares and geldings in the right path as they tried to go away, completely scared by the swirling hole they had to go through. But a few bites from the dark stallion were convincing enough. Harry and Teneb smiled as their mounts disappeared. Both knew that they would wait at the end, and keep the other horses where they would arrive.

They went to Rexeran and Gae.

After assuring them that they were fine, they waited for Demenor's signal to leave. During these few minutes, the two Dragons showed them where and how to sit while traveling on their backs.

Finally, with the help of their bonded, they climbed on them as Demenor motioned to them to do so.

Smirking, Harry noticed that Garth and his friends were riding with their mentors. Rexeran sprang in the sky with a powerful thrust.



Harry was placed just in front of the wing, on the back between two scales and was using his magic to hold himself on the Sowaroc.

Now we need to join our mind, said the Dragon, as they reached the good height.

Flying had always been Harry's passion. If being on a broomstick was exhilarating, flying a dragon was completely different, there was a power that wasn't present with a broomstick, that plus the fact that Harry wasn't alone. The movements of the wings reminded him of Buckbeak, the Hippogriff. But this time the back was straight so he wasn't slipping backwards: the scales were keeping him in place.

When he joined minds with Rexeran, he reached another level of flying: suddenly, he WAS the dragon, he felt the air under his wings, caressing him, felt the amazing feeling of the speed and the height they had reached.

Harry? Let me take the control, we're going to Jump.

Alright.

The Jump was an experience Harry was never going to forget: They seemed to become part of the Magic and followed its streams down to Horevald. For the whole thing, there was the comforting presence of Rexeran at the back of his mind.

Finally they reappeared in the sky of Horevald.

Harry couldn't deny the elvish genius when it came to architecture. The city was splendid, with lots of trees. The houses integrated themselves in the nature and seemed so fragile so delicate. Horevald was the biggest elvish city in the kingdom: a big castle, residence of the royal family, surrounded by all the academies and the two temples. Then came the houses, with small paths going through the city. A large clearing was devoid of any habitations and Harry understood why when the Dragon dove to land there. Quite a lot of people were there to welcome them... Most of them cheered at the sight of the Dragons and more when they saw a Sowaroc and an Emnag. As they noticed that Teneb was riding the silver Dragon, the cheers were deafening. But when the attention turned to the



Sowaroc's rider, silence fell on the crowd and whispers started to circulate. Harry held his head high as he dismounted Rexeran, following the other riders' lead. He bowed to the great golden Dragon, who bowed in return, provoking more hushed whispers.

Harry walked to Teneb.

"I was right... "

"You don't know for sure, give them a chance!"

Harry seemed doubtful about the whole having decided not to get his hope too high.

"Do we have to go now?" the wizard asked finally.

No, replied mentally Rexeran. We will call you when you'll be needed.

"Thank you."

As Harry looked around for Shadow, he met shocked, confused and even scornful eyes. Straining his ears, he caught some parts of the talks going on.

"How is it possible?"

"Yes... Human... but ... weak!"

"There must... mistake... no way..."

"I never thought.... day...human filth.... allowed."

"How could..."

He stopped listening, his eyes hardened, these people weren't going to accept him, no matter how hard he tried.

"Do you know a quiet place?" he asked lowly.

"Yes, we just need our horses..."

"Thank you."



Harry whistled sharply, and suddenly two horses erupted in the clearing and stopped near them.

"Good boys," muttered Teneb, before jumping on Myst's back. Turning to their Dragons, he bowed his head. "If you excuse us?" They nodded, then he looked at his friend.

"Follow me."

They left, followed by every gaze.

[illegible]

Well here is the new chapter. I hope you liked it.

Anyway thanks to everyone who reviewed this chapter.

Now to answer several question:

Lucy Fair : Thanks for pointing that out, well to clear things out, Garth and co knew hat means that they couldn't be a full-fledged rider, not that they couldn't bond.

The Mad Tortoise: the point you made will be answered a bit later, I hope the explanation will be good enough for you.

Kipkerensky: Sirius? You'll see. I didn't develop Hogwarts' events to much but Sirius will definitively have his part to play. This story is now AU, due to OotP's release, and I need Sirius in my story.

JasonPotter: The Daryns get two years of training: at the end of the first one, they bond, pledge allegiance, then go back to the Headquarters for a second year to improve in the fields they were the weakest at the ceremony and to get used to flying a dragon.

Chrispy1000000 : Thanks for the advice, I had a very enjoyable reading those stories.

Thanks to all of you, you're the best !



## Chapter Seventeen

Teneb led Harry to a paddock.

“We can leave our horses here, this is Myst’s private paddock. There are charms preventing the entrance of none but keyed people. Only I and Celen are keyed in so far. I’m going to key you in too, so that you can let Shadow in here,” he explained as he dismounted his horse.

Nodding while climbing down his stallion’s back, Harry approached his friend.

“What do I do?”

“Just give me your hand, and relax, or try to.”

“Alright.”

Holding on Harry’s hand, Teneb muttered a few words. Both their hand glowed green.

“Done, we can enter.”

Teneb opened the gates and led Myst in by the bridle. Harry just motioned to Shadow to follow him and stepped forwards. They were training Myst to answer signs or words but the grey stallion hadn’t reach Shadow’s level. Taking the saddle and bridle away, and after checking them for injuries, they gave the horses some food, water and patted them lightly. Harry took an apple from his pocket and cut it in two, holding Teneb one half, while giving the other part to his horse. Shadow ate it happily, neighing thankfully to his master, shoving his finely cut head, his ears pointed forwards, in Harry’s chest, his long mane falling before his eyes.

“Thank you boy, you’re the greatest...”

For a few moments, Harry let himself relax a bit, brushing through the silky dark hairs. A small yip distracted him. Lucky was trying to get out of the bag, having got fed up with waiting. He was a curious, young fox and wanted to see the world, not the inside of a bag...



"I should have named you Trouble," said Harry, taking the small animal out. The ginger creature struggled a bit before climbing on his shoulder, his claws firmly planted in the fabric of Harry's tunic. He started to nibble at Harry's ear, apparently in a playful mood.

"Alright, little one, you want to play this way?"

Sitting on the ground, Harry took the little fox off of him and started to scratch him at the belly. Yipping, the fox tried to escape. He managed to slip under Harry tunic and started to worm his way up, wriggling thus tickling Harry, who started to laugh wholeheartedly. As the tunic had a tight collar, he couldn't get out this way and went down. By this time, Harry was laughing his head off. He finally caught the little escapee before he got out of breath completely.

"Here you are!"

He put him down and the small animal started to tug at his pants.

"As much as I prefer your company to the one of those I'm going to join, I can't stay... But we'll play when I get back."

Sitting, Lucky, looked at him, clearly saying 'You better be back soon!'

Chuckling, Harry, turned to Shadow.

"You'll keep an eye on him, right?"

Shadow snorted as Lucky yipped indignantly.

Teneb had watched his friend, smiling. It was not often he saw him that carefree and relaxed. This was what he had meant earlier. Harry had big trouble relaxing. He could do it to enter a trance, as it was just a short time, but during the day, it was very difficult for him to relieve some tension. After seeing his life, Teneb knew it was partly because of his upbringing, but also because of his stay here. From what he had seen in his friend memories, he had been quite open and readable before, but now, when you didn't know him, you felt like hitting a wall. The face was expressionless, the eyes blank. A perfect mask, which only those close enough could pierce. As Harry



played with the little fox, Teneb had the distinct feeling that this was the true Harry, the youth he would have been if not for all he had to go through. But you can't change the past, no matter how many of you used...

"Harry... There some things I have to tell you about my people... To be prepared."

Immediately, Harry focused on his dark haired friend.

"Alright."

"This evening, we're going to have to pledge allegiance to the King and the country, well, not for you and I still haven't decided what I'm going to do. Here, the Royal family is the main power: there is King Enrys, Queen Valera, Celen, their heir and Najira, the bastard daughter of the King who is three months younger than Celen. The royals are always elvish, but besides that, the positions are open to Magis, Elementals or elves, no matter the race; our three communities are completely mixed, there even were some mixed weddings. Then you have the High Counselor."

"Your father," interrupted Harry.

"Yes. After that comes the council. It's made of four representatives from every parts of the our society: Religious, Nobility, Fighters, Workers, Healers. They are elected or named by their corporations. They help with the decision, keep updated on the life of everyone and report to the King who has the last say on decisions."

"So far, your system looks good."

"Yes, but as in every system, there is corruption. The King is surrounded by a court, which try to please him through every way to gain some key positions, the Elite guards' position, some financial powers, some favors... Never forget that you're going to enter a spiders web. You'll be seen as a threat as you have power. They'll either try to rally you to them if you can bring them something, or they'll try to bring you down."

"I've always like destroying spider-webs."



“I’m not joking, they’ll judge you on your appearance first. Clothes and appearance are really important for the elfish culture, by a sign, a mark, a cloak, you can know to which clan or political group the individual belongs. For the nobles, the colors will show their family’s affiliation. Light blue and silver are my family colors for example.”

“Then I’ll give them something to talk about for the next ten years,” said Harry, a wicked gleam in his eyes.

Sending him a bewildered look, Teneb went on with his explanation.

“Just be wary of them, alright? Well, back to the subject, under the council, you have the different corporations, clans... but most importantly, the two temples. One dedicated to Lunai where the Doijas, Lunai’s priestesses, live, and the other one to Solyen, with the Deisers. These two cults are very important. The priests and priestesses are supposed to stay out of the way of politics. Most of them do, but there are always rotten apples in the bags... The current two leaders, Xhan Luan and Xhana Cya, of both orders are trustworthy, you can trust them to some extent. They’ll follow the rules of their gods, meaning that they can’t judge you without proof.”

Harry snorted at this, but refrained from any comment.

“When you meet a priest or a priestess, you must salute them, like this.”

Teneb crossed his arms on his chest and tilted his upper body forwards.

“You’ll recognize them at their outfit, never ignore them.”

“Alright, I think I can stand that.”

“Good, another power source is the Elit.”

“The Elit?”

“The personal guards of the King, only the best enter it. There’s always fifty of them. Every two years, ten of them retire, and ten new are accepted, chosen for their skills and also their integrity, or at least



they were, at the beginning. Their age ranks from twenty-five human years to thirty. They hold power over the police, the army, are charged of the royal family's security and are granted several privileges, such as an exemption of taxes, some lands, money, access to the best and finest commodities... Some of them use this power for the good, others for their own profit. I used to think that to be normal, but now... I can't... You've been a bad influence Harry."

"Yes, but do you wish that I hadn't?"

Teneb furrowed his brow. Despite all the pain some realizations had brought, he couldn't say he wished for things to have stayed the way they were. If he hadn't chosen to follow Harry, he would have remained Teneb, the teacher's pet, everybody's golden elf. He would still be favored, but he would have remained blind, and he wouldn't have met Kaelia, or she'd have been different. Now, he knew the truth. His people wasn't perfect, wasn't pure. He could see the taints, the narrow-mindedness, the corruption, and he would try to make things right. He only hoped that Celen would listen. The young prince would have the power to make changes, to clean the system.

"No, I'm glad you had."

Harry smiled.

"So tonight, we'll enter the throne room, as we didn't go with the other Daryns in the Waiting chamber. Once there, the King will make a speech, then he'll call us, one by one to the throne and Demenor will speak a bit about our achievements. Then the King will complete the ritual by accepting the allegiance of the rider. After that, he'll give said rider a mark to allow him to go through the Barrier."

"The Barrier?"

"Yes, it has to do with the reason why elves have parted from the humans?"

"Tell me what happened...", whispered Harry. Arxeren had never accepted to tell him, saying it wasn't his place to do so.



Teneb sighed, he knew he would have had to tell him this story, but he wasn't looking forwards to it.

"Alright. Ages ago, both our peoples were living in peace, cooperating, working together, sharing their progress. Elves helped with Magic as they had mastered it for far longer than the humans, who, in return, helped them with technology and fighting techniques. You have to know something about elvish towns, they are built on magic's flows' crosses. To stabilize the grounds, we used a type of stone which can pump magic and regulate the flows. Once, one of the stones disappeared. It had been one of the main one, stabilizing one of our biggest cities. At this time, the communities had their own cities, sure there were some quarters for outsiders, but they couldn't live there all the time. The disappearance of this stone, made the magic go out of control, thus provoking a giant earthquake. As the city was near the sea, the earthquake induced a huge tsunami. Most of the inhabitants and those living near were killed, the cities in a ten kilometer range were completely destroyed, those further suffered damages. The few who managed to escape reported that the last ones to have been seen around the stone had been humans."

"You mean that the stones weren't protected?!"

"Not really, it was placed on an altar in the center of the city and there were always guards around it. But the stone needed to be in the open for a better regulation. It was also used in case there was an accident or a natural disaster. The different groups of Healers would draw energy from it."

"I still think it was dangerous, there should have been protection around it..."

"Well, there should have been some, but there wasn't and we can't change the past. As you can guess, the human community was accused of the theft and of the disaster. They denied any implication in it but helped in the reconstruction. Sadly, resentment grew and violence escalated. An investigation was started, but they couldn't do much, the few witnesses were in shock and their testimonies weren't very precise. One of them remembered having seen a delegation of humans going to the stone, they had came for a Healer as their town



had been hit with a new disease which was quickly killing most of the population and threatened to spread to the nearby lands. He then remembered hearing some cries, a blinding light, and then the grounds started to tremble...”

Teneb stopped for a few seconds to look at Harry . The young wizard was deep in thought.

“The violence reached its peak a year later. Elves became more and more resentful against humans as the number of casualties was found and as the damages were evaluated. There were more and more fights, insults... Riots were often barely avoided. Finally, it exploded. Elves cornered a human and attacked him. While defending himself, he killed an elf. From that point, the fights multiplied, and more and more people died. My people decided to take revenge on yours. They created a new stone, but this one had different properties, it drained the Magic from living people. They created several stones and a main one. They placed the small ones in most humans cities, except the far away communities. They said it was presents to try to reconcile our people. The humans, though a little suspicious, accepted, after having checked them. But Elves had a far better knowledge of magic than them, they had hidden the true properties of these stones. Once they were all in place they passed word for the Magis, Elementals and Elves to leave the humans towns targeted, or to wear protective talismans, they then used the main stone, connecting it to the smaller ones. In one night, four fifth of the humans had been stripped of their powers who had been trapped in the stone. Thus were born non magical people.”

“Muggles...,” whispered Harry.

“Yes, they only kept the Magic that was inherent of all beings. Then my people, the Magis and Elementals used the power of this stone to erase the memory of the elves from every human mind, they probably missed some, but that wasn't important, who would have believed them? They also decided to hide their countries. During the past year, they had pushed the humans away from their territories, establishing, little by little, huge lands only occupied by Elves, Elementals and Magis. The biggest one was situated on the western part of Europe, a smaller one in the south-eastern part of Asia, an other one on south-



western part of South America. The Water Elementals had weakened the grounds and the Earth ones had sent small shocks at the weakened places, cutting their lands from the human occupied places. The whole process provoked small earthquakes and flooding, but they saw it fit that humans cities suffered what they had to endured. Four islands were formed: When they parted the larger part from western Europe, a smaller one detached itself. Magis then moved it further away in the ocean and placed several enchantments on it. Basically they modified the world's magic, creating a kind of hole in it, They twisted it, to make it surround the different islands they had created. They modified it a bit, making impenetrable, for every outside eyes, there was nothing here but water. To reinforce it, the air Elementals combined their powers with them and when someone, strangers or not, approached, a fog raised, to disorient them. The areas soon became legends in your history, they were given others name through time, you know them as Avalon, Atlantis, Xanadu, The Bermuda Triangle."

"When did it happen?" Harry was curious and a bit confused at this tale. Such harsh reactions when there were so many unknowns...

"20 000 years ago... The human communities that managed to keep some knowledge built empires like in Egypt, China, Central America with the Aztec, Mayas... They didn't start at the same time, most of the people fall back in a archaic state, forgetting most of their knowledge. Meanwhile, the wizarding parts surviving, hidden, as they were heavily resented by the ones who had lost their magic. We cut all links with the humans and kept on living as we had always done. But we had overlooked something. You see your people had keep some strong wizards, several mages and sorcerers, they combined their strength and cast a strong enchantments on all of us. We don't really know what they did, only the oldest of us know."

Harry nodded sharply, the block he had found on Teneb coming back to his mind. It couldn't be it, Harry and his friend had seen the same one on him. He had forgotten to ask Arxeren... He'd have to do so... There was something fishy going on...

Teneb sighed, as he had told the story to his friend he had realized, that, as many things he had been told, the story had big holes in it.



“There, you know the whole thing.”

“The hatred comes from there? For 20 000 years?”

“Yes, that and the enchantments your people cast.”

“Are there proofs that humans were the culprits, do you know for sure it was them?”

“No,” sighed Teneb, “as a lot of things in our history, we only know what we’re told... The fact was that the humans of the delegation seen near the stone had asked the council for a stone a few weeks before. One of their main towns was slowly sinking, as they had built it on an unstable area. The council had refused their request, saying that humans weren’t ready for this technique yet, but they had told them that they would send some Elementals to stabilize the city. Apparently, nothing had been done, so they came back to the city, and the next thing was the disappearance of the stone.”

“That’s not proof... That’s suspicions.”

“I know... That’s why I intend to look through every books, parchment of Horevald’s library. Maybe, there’ll be something interesting in there...”

Harry was doubtful about it.

“I wouldn’t count on it too much... What about this veil? Does it prevent people from leaving too?”

“Yes. Only riders, messengers, merchants and people allowed to can pass them. You either have to bear the mark we now have, or wear a talisman. Moreover, you have to know how to part the fog.”

“Great! How am I going to leave then?”

“I’m sure Rexeran will help you.”

Harry smiled at the thought of the great Dragon. Thinking of him, made him remember something he had overlooked so far.



“Teneb? Do you remember the blocks we found when we lifted the effect of the potion?”

Teneb furrowed his brows.

“Yes... I had forgotten about them... Did you ask Arxeren about them?”

“No. I forgot too... Yours was different from mine.”

What did you forget to tell me? Come to the plane now!

Alright!

Looking at Teneb, he signaled for him to meet in the plane. Seconds later, they were in the now familiar spirit plane.

So, what did you forget Harry?

Both Kaelia and Arxeren were behind them.

Teneb? The Emnag-like spirit looked at the young elf.

Well, just before the binding, when we had to take off the effects of the Potion, I noticed a block on Teneb. There was one on me too, but it was not the same... explained Harry.

Arxeren and Kaelia shared a look and disappeared with a small pop for a few seconds. They popped back quickly, bearing grim looks.

We saw them, for now, don't try anything about them; we have to bring this problem before the Council. I ask you to leave this matter to us, any actions now would only worsen the matter more, alright?

We need your promise that you won't try anything, added Kaelia.

Both slightly stunned, the boys could only nod.

Good, now, I'll advise you to go to the throne room, the ceremony is about to start.

Arxeren gave them a slight push.



Alright! We know when we're not welcome.

They left the plane. Harry had toyed with the idea of going to the soul plane, to tell the news about his bonding to his parents. He had gone four more times to the plane since the first time and had gotten to know his family a bit.

They opened their eyes and stretched, getting up. They usually sat when they had to go to the planes, it was easier on your body this way.

"Well, let's go, but before we do that, I think a small modification in our attire would be in order. We can't attend a ceremony this important with wrinkled clothes, can we?"

Teneb smirked at this.

"Full ceremonial?"

"Of course," answered his human friend.

They flicked their hands and their clothes changed: They were now wearing the full ceremonial outfit of riders. Black pants with bronze trim, black boots, a white shirt, covered by the tunic, which revealed their status. Blood red, it flowed to their feet. It was slit in the middle, on the front, and magically zipped from their waist to their collar, so no way to open the tunic was visible. They had to point their wand to the collar and it unzipped itself. The tunic had a high collar. The hem was ornate with flames which flared up and seemed to move with their every movement. The long flowing sleeves were ornate in the same manner. Their Athar symbol was visible on their right shoulder. On the back, a dragon was embroidered, his wings wide opened, his tail circling the waist to finished on the right side of the tunic, and breathing flames which ran along the collar. The front was bare of anything. Their necklaces were glowing on their chest. A belt with a dragon's head as a buckle, on which hung their swords completed their outfit. Hidden from the eyes, they each had a dagger in their boots, and throwing knives on their forearms. The buckle of their belt could open and reveal little darts with either soporific or more or less poisonous substances. Both of them were similar in their looks, accentuating the visual effect. Teneb was slightly taller than Harry,



but both of them shared the same dark hair. Teneb was having it the elvish way: long, reaching past his shoulder. He braided the upper half, tying it with the color of his clan. Harry had settled for an in-between look. He had absolutely refused to wear it the elfish way, but after having his bangs flying in his eyes all the times, he had seen the good sides of growing it a bit. It now reached his neck, long enough to tie it in a half ponytail.

Both of them shared another trait, one they had hidden, as it would have raised to many questions. After their first trip to the Magic plan, they had noticed a white streak in their hair. These parts had completely lost their color. Their guardians had said it was because of the amount of magic present in the plane. It gave them a odd look, but accentuated their features, making them look more than their seventeen years.

“Ready?” asked Teneb.

“As ready as I’ll ever be.”

“Follow me, I know a short cut.”

They left quickly and headed back to the castle.

Meanwhile, Demenor, the masters, mentors, riders, new riders and ex-Daryns headed to the castle, followed by those who had been here to welcome them. Usually, it was a happy walk, the riders talking with the spectators, the new riders telling them of their life at the Headquarters and of their accomplishments as they rode next to their mentors who looked at them with pride... Usually there were laughs, smiles, jokes. But this time, there were shushed whispers, confused glances and silence. The headmaster of the Headquarters could feel many eyes on him.

The ten youths, the five bonded and the five refused, where riding along with their mentors. He had done nothing to stop the two Athars from leaving. Firstly because he didn’t have the right to order them, and secondly because he knew that he had no control over them. They were powerful, two of the most powerful riders he had ever seen, surely the best, no one among the riders would be able to stop them if they were set on doing something. The problem was they



were completely out of control, with no tie to the riders, no loyalties to the Headquarters...

Demenor sighed, wondering when things had gone so wrong. Deep down, he knew when they had; the moment the young human had entered the Headquarters. And it was this fact that depressed him. He had always prided himself to be an open elf, somebody who could adapt to a new situation, but in the end, he was like everyone else: prejudiced, even if not to the point of some people, he couldn't see past the ideas he had always learned.

And look where it had led him, he knew he had been nothing like a mentor should be to Harry. The least he could have done would have been to keep himself updated about his progresses. The young man now only held mistrust, scorn and anger for his people, the Magis and Elementals weren't any better to his eyes...The future looked grim. The riders would surely be punished by the Draconian Council for breaking the rules of the Dragons concerning the behavior towards a fellow rider or an apprentice. They had earned this punishment, and he wouldn't protest against it, whatever their decision was.

The reaction of the welcome crowd hadn't helped the already strained relationship or lack of thereof between them and the human. Now all he could do was trying to prevent things from worsening and to do so, he had to speak to the King as soon as possible.

All the Dragons had left, except the Sowaroc and the Emnag. They were flying over them. Both of them had warned Demenor that they wanted to be present when he would talk to the King. He could do nothing but agree to this demand.

They finally reached the castle. Demenor was always happy to come back here. It was always a warming sight to see the magnificent buildings. They dismounted and left their horses to the care of the stable hands waiting for them. The crowd which had followed them, spread through the castle to tell the news. One of the riders was a human and he was riding a Sowaroc!

The mentors led the ex-Daryns, even those who weren't chosen, to the waiting room, where all the newly bonded riders had to wait for the ceremony. This was made to strengthen their links. Then they all



went to throne room. The riders and mentors and masters took their places, with the people already seated in the room which was starting to fill itself, as Demenor walked to the stage where the King, Doryan, the High counselor, the Queen, and Celen sat. Najira wasn't here and Demenor was grateful for this. The girl's powers had awoken during the year. Combined with her elvish heritage, her veela abilities had been strengthen and given more power. With a smile, or a look, she could make males faint, do her every wish. That was the problem which had made him absent from the Headquarters for quite a while. They had to teach her control, and for the meantime restrain her abilities. In this case only the power of the riders could be efficient. The other problem was the girl's instability. The mix between Veela and Elf, though great on the powers side, had been disappointing regarding the mental state of Najira. Not a lot of people knew this, the girl was a good actress, Demenor had to concede this to her. But she was also prone to huge mood swings and above all was very easily angered. But her Veela side made her addictive to the admiration of others. She liked to be surrounded by a crowd of males. She sought the recognition in them, as the King couldn't give her the status of princess, it had made her a bit frustrated... It also made her vulnerable to the manipulations of others, in particular her father, who was seeing the powers of his bastard daughter as a tool. Shaking these thoughts away, he closed the distance between him and the royal family. The two Dragons were waiting for him in an unused part of the gardens. He'd better not make them wait too long.

"Demenor, It's s good to see you! How went the ceremony? How is Teneb? With whom did he bond? Is he alright? Can I see him?..." Celen was nearly bouncing out of his seat in his impatience at seeing his childhood friend.

The King laughed at his son's behavior.

"Now, Celen, you'll see him soon. You know the rules. I'm sure young Teneb did very good and made us proud, didn't he Demenor?"

"He did, he is one of the Athar and bonded with an Emnag," said the headmaster, not wanting to say more in public.



Daryan seemed about to burst with pride, Celen was apparently overjoyed at this. The king had a smile on his face. Young Teneb had proved to be worthy of the High Counselor position.

‘That’s excellent, but why the grim face, Demenor? Surely you must be happy about his?’

“Yes, but there were some problems which I need to talk about with you and Doryan. In private,” he added.

“Really? Then, we’ll talk, can Celen come, I want to associate him as much as possible to my decisions.”

“If you think he can come, he can.”

The King turned to his wife who had remained silent during the whole thing.

“My dear, would you look after the room while we’ll be talking.”

“Of course, don’t worry about that Enrys,” she replied, her voice melodious and as charming as ever.

Many thought Queen Valera was a weak wife, submitting to her husband’s every desire. Only the closest people knew that she was a force to reckon with. In the first years of her husband’s reign she had been the unknown ally of the King, telling him the gossips, helping him with the nobles, playing the charming, discreet wife. She had a fiery temper but acted well. She was also intelligent and powerful. Celen was the proof. The young elf was proving to be extremely skilled in a lot of fields and benefited of the best education possible. But after the birth of Najira had come to her ears, things had changed. She had never forgiven her husband for cheating on her. Sure she was still helping him, but only out of duty and not of love. In public, they still displayed the perfect couple-picture, but their closest friends knew that hadn’t shared the same bed for five years, which was the time when Najira’s mother died, sending her to the castle with a letter in which she gave enough proves of the young girl’s parentage.

“Thank you, we’ll have to go outside, two dragons asked to be present for this talk.”



Demenor could see he had piqued their curiosity.

He led them to where the two Dragons were waiting for them. The elves gasped at the sight of the two magical Dragons. Demenor was impressed too, having already seen them before. They exuded power and authority.

“May I present you to these two Dragons. Both of them bonded during the ceremony,” said Demenor.

We’re not here to exchange pleasantries, Demenor... The Dragons went to gather the Council where your punishment will be chosen, don’t await lenience on our behalf. We’ll have to be present to this council, said the Sowaroc.

“Well, you heard of the fact that a human has been chosen?”

Doryan and Enrys nodded. Celen was confused but said nothing.

“You kept him, if I remember well, took him as your Daryn, not that you had a choice... I presume that he was rejected and is now back to his world, his memory erased, after all, it was clearly a mistake?...”

The Sowaroc was growling by this moment, stopping the King in his tirade.

You will refrain from this type of comment towards someone placed under the sign of the Dragons. There is no mistakes in the choice of the Daryns. Said Gae.

Demenor though best to speak now before things degenerated.

“I forgot about him. Just before I left the Headquarters, something came to my attention. With Najira’s problems, I forgot to tell you. Teneb has been staying with his friends until the presentation, but after this event, he was seen with the human and sided with him. I had no time to take care of this problem before my departure and when I came back, it was too late, they had became very close. I decided to let the masters take care of this as I had other issues to deal with and I assumed that Teneb was merely studying the human for his own knowledge. I wasn’t thinking that Harry, that’s the human



name, would be chosen.” Demenor eyed warily the Sowaroc who looked clearly angered. But he had to be honest.

“He befriended a human?” said Doryan, “Are you sure?”

Celen stayed silent, apparently lost in his thought.

“I never noticed anything about them. Teneb kept on excelling in his studies and as for the human I didn’t try to know. I wasn’t expecting him to stay. I only understood my mistake at the ceremony. During the Tournament, Teneb proved himself worthy of the title of Athar, but the fact was that the human, though average at trailing and weak at archery, beat him during the riding trial. He also proved to be a fire gifted and won this part too. During the Duels, they ended in a tie. He demonstrated immense powers, powers that no one, besides Teneb apparently, had been aware of.”

This time they were completely shocked.

“How is this possible?” stuttered the King, “A human can’t be that powerful, it’s not natural!”

“Wait, there’s more to come...”

Demenor, then told them of the events of the bonding, how they had both been chosen after the rejection of five Daryns who had been seen as promising riders by everyone. How they had challenged one of the Daryns to Honor and Honor and Blood Duels...

Once he was done, the three elves looked at him in disbelief.

“You mean that a human, not only managed to earn himself the title of Athar but also managed to bond with a Sowaroc?”

He did, answered Rexeran. I am his bonded.

The elves starred with wide open eyes at him, wondering where the trick was.

“Al-alright,” stammered the King. “Where is he? What do you know about him?”



"I don't know where he is. Seeing the reactions of the welcoming crowd, he and Teneb left."

"They what!" cried Doryan. "What about the ceremony?!"

They'll be present at the ceremony, rest assured of that. replied Gae, calmly.

"Why didn't you stop them?" asked the King.

Demenor sighed.

"Nobody could have. We don't have any authority left over them."

"Why?"

For several reasons. In Teneb's case the fact that his mentor and friends rejected him unless he cut his ties to Harry, In Harry's case, the sole behavior of every person living in the Headquarters was enough to make him distrust your races. Add to that, in both cases, the attacks they underwent from their fellow Daryns and you'll have a sample of the reasons why. answered Rexeran.

"They have very little respect left for the riders, the human is wary of any Elves, Magis and Elementals, he doesn't trust them anymore. Teneb, I don't know, he has lost some of his faith in us, but I think he's still hoping to find some good somewhere."

There was a silence. Doryan and Celen were trying to imagine the changes in Teneb. The King was trying to see the best way to deal with this situation.

"What does he look like? What are his powers?" he asked.

"Well, he's about Teneb's height, one or two inches smaller, he's got the same black hair, only shorter, he's slender. His most recognizable feature are his eyes. They're green, a deep strange green. He's also got a scar on his forehead. I know little of him. He's a wizard, apparently quite important in his world. Currently a Dark Lord is terrorizing his people and the non magical community, killing left and



right... He has visions of these massacres during his sleep. Over than that, I only know his name: Harry. I don't know his last name."

Demenor paused, racking his memory for more information on the young rider.

"Ah! He's also an orphan, from what the masters told me."

The King was storing this information carefully.

"What about his powers?"

Demenor sighed, he didn't like having to go over what he had lost, in particular when it was his own fault. Before he could open his mouth, he received a sharp order on the Dragons behalf, which basically told him to keep himself to the powers Harry demonstrated and not tell of those he had learned afterwards. Knowing better than disobeying the Dragons he did just that.

"Well, he's a fighting and dueling expert." He turned to Celen. "I think he could give you a run for your money in fencing. I never saw the style he used before. He managed to beat Effilin easily, and I think Teneb possess the same abilities, though to a lesser degree. He apparently mastered most of the forms of combat. As I said before, he's a fire gifted and since we're all alive, I can tell that he has a really good control on this gift. Both Teneb and he were able to conjure elemental animals and ride them. He managed to ride Shadow and befriend him. I think he has slight mental powers, but I don't know about them, as Nerthor didn't see anything. But seeing he was able to bond, he must have some. Archery isn't his best asset, he is good for a human, but average at best in this field. Trailing is in between, He's good with animals. About healing, I don't know, I never saw him use this type of power."

"Alright... Well, I'll be careful with him tonight, it would be a shame to lose him completely."

If it isn't already done..., snorted Rexeran.

Be nice, chided Gae. We must go, the Council is ready to begin, we'll keep you informed of our decision."



And be prepared. Added Rexeran, before unfolding his wing and springing in the air, followed by Gae, deliberately forgetting to bid goodbye to the elves.

The King turned to his son and Counselor.

“Doryan, Celen, go ahead, Demenor and I will follow. Try to keep the room waiting until we’re finished.”

They nodded and left, still deep in thought.

Then the King turned to Demenor, an annoyed glint in the eye.

“What in Lunai were you thinking you were doing! How could you let a tool like this slip through our fingers. You know that we need powerful individuals, you know why! So how could you leave him escape us!”

Demenor was a bit angry at this.

“And you wouldn’t have done the same thing? You would have welcomed a human with open arm and show him friendship? You would have become his friend?! How funny! You would have been like us, you would have ignored him. That’s what I did, I forgot about him and didn’t stop the masters in their abuse. At least in my case it wasn’t deliberate abuse.”

“I would have at least evaluated his potential. If you had done so, you would have seen his power.”

“And what do you think we do when a new rider is accepted. While they’re still knocked out, when they arrive, we do some test on them. Hi showed an average level, with some anomalies, but we dismissed it as a fluke.”

“What sort of anomalies?”

“Well some strange power threads, which seemed to have been torn up, other which seemed to have been gained. He had big reserve of raw power, but they were completely locked. He had also a kind of block other some of his centers.”



“Strange.”

“Yes.”

“Well if your scans didn’t show any kind of unusual powers, how is it possible for him to be so powerful?”

“Simple, he’s a human, they don’t develop their magic as we do. They remain at an average level before going through a magical growth. The magic on the island must have sped the process in Harry. He must have some aid too.”

“Really?”

“I don’t know from who though.”

“Well, what is done, is done. Now I have to correct your mistake. I will tie him to me. He’ll make a fine weapon. With him at my disposal, nobody will dare challenge me. Moreover I might be able to transfer some of his abilities to me... What do you think of it?”

“I would be careful if I were you Enrys. He’s powerful and he’ll not willingly bow to you, unless you do some thing akin to a miracle. If you managed to earn his respect, it’ll be an achievement.”

Demenor didn’t like this side of Enrys. It wasn’t a well known side. The King was a manipulator, a calculating, cold man, who never did something if it didn’t gain him some advantages.

“He will be my servant, or he won’t leave this kingdom. I can’t afford to have a loose rider, or to lose someone with his powers. He won’t noticed a thing, but in the end, he’ll bow to me and I now how to do that...”

“I wouldn’t do it Enrys, he already despises us, why give him more reasons to do so?”

The King gave him a cold smile.

“We should go back to the room, the ceremony is about to start.”



Knowing that arguing with the king would be useless, Demenor sighed and followed his king back in. None of them noticed two pairs of eyes looking at them as they walked away.

“He can go to the seventh hell,” one of them growled dangerously, his green eyes alight with a dangerous fire.

Teneb and Harry had been walking through the gardens back to the throne room, when they heard some cries.

“... How could you let a tool....”

This immediately got their attention and they approached the place where the King and Demenor were talking. Keeping absolutely silent, they didn't miss one word of their talk. Teneb felt his heart tightened at hearing the king's words. Another of his illusions broken into pieces.

Once they left, he didn't dare look at Harry.

“He can go to the seventh hell,” he heard his blood brother say and through his bond, he could sense his deep anger.

“I'm sorry Harry, I just thought that... he would be different... Just don't judge Celen and my parents from him, that's all I ask. I want to believe that there'll be someone who'll be ready to look beyond the appearances.”

Harry's eyes softened. He could sense his friend's sadness.

“Don't be sorry Teneb, how are you faring? It must be harder on you than on me... I didn't live with them before...”

“I'll live... it's just so disappointing to see that the models you had while growing up turn out to be complete narrow-minded people. I expected more of them, that's all.”

“Well, let's go, I promise to hold my judgment over your friend and family until I see their reaction.”

“Thank you. By the way, I'll follow you in your pledge. After what I heard, I couldn't pledge loyalty to him.”



“Are you sure about this? You are already branded as an outcast because you are siding with me. If you do this, I don’t know what’ll happen.”

“Harry, I’ll only say it once, so you’d better listen carefully. I knew what I was doing when I helped you that day, during the presentation. I’ve never regretted it. I might have suffered a bit, but you opened my eyes to reality, not to the nice little picture of an ideal world my people is casting around itself.”

A warm smile followed this tirade.

“Thank you Teneb, you’ll never know how much it means to me...”

They clasped their forearm together, renewing their blood oath:

|                                       |      |          |         |    |       |
|---------------------------------------|------|----------|---------|----|-------|
| "Ilan                                 | ory  | sianter" | (united | by | mind) |
| "Ilan                                 | ory  | saroll"  | (United | by | soul) |
| "Desen                                | hela | athia"   | (Death  | or | life) |
| "Lith tarx jomi" (linked through all) |      |          |         |    |       |

Straightening their clothes one last time, they walked to the throne room, the perfect image of power, authority and control. Stopping at the doors, they heard a light chatter, showing that the ceremony hadn’t started yet.

They looked at each other.

*Ready for the show?*

*As ready as I’ll ever be!* answered Teneb.

With a sharp push, they opened the doors and strode in the now deadly silent room. They could feel every pair of eyes on them. And while Harry was completely ignoring it, more focused on the architecture of the room, Teneb was looking at his friend and his father, trying to see what they might do. They may not have realized it, but their reaction would decide for Teneb if he was to stay in his world or follow Harry to his.



Demenor saw them enter. They made a great sight. Both of them were stunning, their dark looks complemented by their clothes, giving them an aura of power, something which was surely wanted. He was quite surprised by the white streak in their hair. They were holding themselves proudly, their head high, displaying the authority their status given them. They stopped near the other Daryns, nodding sharply to Operia and Kobalt, their faces expressionless. Looking around, they didn't see any seats for them. Raising their eyebrow, they turned to Demenor who looked wildly around for the Athar seats. Seeing the satisfied look on Ribor, Xjahl and Vlad's faces, he nearly swore.

Seeing his look, Harry turned to Teneb and smirked. Tilting his head he furrowed his brows a bit. After a few seconds he apparently settled on something as he raised his arm a bit and snapped his fingers.

A comfortable looking chair appeared, holding the traditional emblems of the Athar as well as a flying dragon on the back.

"Nice one," commented Teneb before mimicking his friend gesture and making a similar chair appeared, with a slightly different wood and colors.

Seeing the look on everyone's face, they raised their eyebrows in sync, before looking back at the King, smiling inwardly on the effect they had.

Celen stared at his childhood friend as he stepped in the room. Teneb had changed. Physically, but also mentally. The year had taken his toll on him, making him age very quickly. He was different from the Teneb who left a year earlier, it was to be expected. They locked eyes, Celen could see the doubts in Teneb's, the betrayals he had suffered, the losses, but also the hope. He decided that he wouldn't betray his friend, no matter what. They had sworn, a long time ago, to remain friends forever, and he intended to keep this promise, even if he had to bear the company of a human. At this thought, the young prince turned to the subject in every talk, said human. He had never seen one before. They weren't that different from the elves. Not as aristocratic in their facial features, round ears, and a different aura, well if this aura was anything close to the reality.



He could feel traces of huge manipulation of the aura on both the human and Teneb. He examined the human, Harry, from what Demenor had said. From the first looks, he seemed like a strange guy, quite cold, but powerful. He could sense the power weaved around him like a second skin. Teneb was giving the same effect but not exactly in the same way. The human was surrounded by raw power which he could bend to his will. He saw them walk in together and was puzzled at this. The effects were spectacular, but was it voluntary, he pondered over it until he saw the small look and the smirk they exchanged. Yes, they had planned it. He decided to probe a bit further. Carefully, he opened a bit, focusing his empathy on this Harry. He was a strong empath, a very strong one. It compensated for his weak telepathy. At first he sensed nothing, he probed a bit more and was assaulted by emotion: he was annoyed, he even felt anger, some impatience at seeing this over, gratitude towards Teneb, a deep friendship. Worry for some friends, guilt over something, he couldn't see what. Before he could go further, he felt like a wall was building around these emotions.

If you want to probe, ask first, it's only politeness... But at least you kept to my superficial mind... You should be careful the ceremony is about to begin...

Celen nearly fell off his chair. The mental voice had been strong, laced with hidden power, and gone as quick as it came.

He stared at the dark-haired human. It wasn't that the human was showing strong telepathy, well, maybe a little, but... couldn't the others have noticed? Celen shook his head. There was no mistake. He trusted his empathic gift and relayed on it too much to doubt it now. In a flash he had sensed the bundle of emotions Harry was holding. And after seeing this, well, he had to give him a chance. Teneb had rarely been wrong about people before... Moreover, the young wizard had done nothing to earn his scorn so far. So maybe the humans were weak, compared to elves, but since there were weak elves so why not strong humans? There was something with this one though. It was the same thing he had always sensed in Teneb... Maybe it was their rider-nature, but then he had never seen it in Demenor... He noticed his friend looking at him and smiled at Teneb. He saw the relief, though well hidden, in Teneb's eyes, and



some of the tension leave his body. Yes, he would at least give this Harry the chance of proving himself. Another reason for Celen's decision was his curiosity... He had always wanted to see other people. And here was a member of a race with which elves had not had contacts with for 20 000 years. He wondered how the humans were now... Those who left the island to the other ones did it through roads hidden from the senses and view of every outsider. They must have evolved somewhat, if this specimen was an example of what they had become.

He dismissed these thoughts as his father stood up and the ceremony started.

The King stood up, proudly, trying to gather the attention of everyone. He finally managed it, though some were still throwing short glance to the human. He still couldn't believe what Demenor had told him...

"Tonight, we're gathered to honor those that were found worth to honor our people. Today, the new riders, bonded of the Dragons, were chosen. They will uphold the honors and ideals of their clans, but most of all uphold the Dragon's honor and bring well on us..."

He turned to the masters and mentors.

"To those who guided them with their skills and knowledge, helped them became what they now are, I give my complete admiration. Because it's hard to be a good man, but it's harder to make a good man out of someone. I asked you to applaud those riders who spent this year sharing their knowledge with those youths, shaping them to the state they know are."

Thunderous applause erupted in the room. Celen Demenor, Enrys, and a few others noticed that Harry and Teneb had stiffened at those words. Their whole bodies were tensed, and they seemed annoyed at something.

Bad choice of words, Enrys, thought Demenor.

"Now I present you those who had the honor of being chosen. Out of the twelve candidates, only seven of them bonded. But even those who weren't will see that their training had given them enough



knowledge to secure their future. One by one, they will now step before you, as they will pledge their loyalty to us. Honor them as they dedicate their life to your help.” He sat down, under the cheers of those present. He signaled for Demenor to get the first new rider to the throne.

“Arnelle, now, I call you to this throne” he said loudly. The youth stood up, gracefully and walked to the Royal family. While she did so, Demenor announced her dragon’s type, as well as her accomplishments. She performed the oath ritual and then went back to her seats, now wearing the royal mark over her robes.

The ritual was simple. Harry examined it as Kobalt imitated Arnelle’s action. The young Magis, stepped before the King, bowed and started the oath. While saying the words he unsheathed his sword and knelt while handing it to the King. He then bowed his head, offering his neck to the sword and opened his mind wide open. The last part was done to prevent any treachery while performing the ritual and the King had the right to kill should he takes this oath lightly or for foul intentions. The King entered his mind, placing the royal mark on Kobalt’s being and withdrew from it. Saying the last lines, the monarch gave Kobalt his sword back and his mark. One by one, all the newly chosen riders repeated these actions. It was then Harry’s turn. But both youths had other ideas in head. They both stepped forwards at the same, drawing whispers they ignored. They knew that the other wouldn’t be able to take the Old pledge, should he go after the first one. He would be stopped at the first words. This way, nobody would prevent them from choosing their path. For security, they placed a small repelling charm on the stones on the ground around them. It wouldn’t interfere with the oath and would prevent unwanted interruptions.

Sighing Demenor presented Teneb’s achievements.

“Now, standing before you are those who earned by their skills, work, attitude, the title of Athars. Respected among the respected, they proved to be worthy of this name.” He then started to enumerated their results at the competition. Finally he motioned to them to start. They approached the royal family, but to everyone’s surprise, did not bow to the King. Teneb chose to bow to Celen and the Queen while



Harry barely tilted his head to the heir. Too shocked to act or speak up, the people present watched as one of the scene which hadn't been displayed since the Knights' era, unfolded before them.

Both of them unsheathed their swords and levitated it.

“Dhieza” (Judge)

The swords shone brightly, they then turned to the audience and knelt before them. Then they both started the chant of the Old pledge, neither of them aware of the other.

Harry let the words flow of his mouth.

Thoran'yr jomi genda

(Powers of all kind)

Kalxie velt'ij

(Witness my pledge)

Myrnie desa ovelts'ij

(Listen to my words)

Ory gindis palt, ijri ultren

(By this oath I bind)

Athia'ij, saroll una hetia

(My life, soul and body)

He drew a dagger and cut his arm, letting a drop of blood hit the ground.

Hos orth gildos an bean

(To protect those in need)

Hos desa thea reith



(To come to the help)

Yr gindos, tat fehb orol

(Of those who seek it)

Wad jomi niat'ij

(With all my abilities.)

Ijri, Harry Potter

(I, Harry Potter, )

He closed his hand on his dagger and placed it above his heart.

Haold'yr James Potter

(Son of James Potter)

Una Lily Evans Potter

(And Lily Evans Potter)

Mithen Haoldinn yr gindis valde

(Rightful heir of this name)

Kiolie hetin'ij desa Thoran

(Offer my being to the Powers)

Hos cejath, fehbath, seriaeth hela raseth

(To serve, help, fight or comfort)

Una iltin waloth aes qoeros'ij

(And recognize them as my rulers)

Wad mith'yr athia hela desen kenda ijrín.



(With right of life and death over me.)

By the end of the chant, the young wizard had opened all his magical being, and was awaiting Magic's judgment. After a few seconds, he felt a light tingling in his body and saw the sword descend and fall lightly in his hands.

“Wad athia’ij, saroll una hetia, ljri cejan idri paho.”

(With my life, soul or body, I will serve you.)

Silence echoed in the room, as both youth sheathed their swords back. They shared a look. Before going back to their places.

A voice stopped them.

“Don’t you forget anything?”

Harry stopped, not bothering to turn and face the King who was looking at them with narrowed eyes.

“No.”

“Think a little... I’m sure you’ll see what I mean.”

“No, I want nothing to do with you, not after hearing what I did tonight in the gardens. Never.” He walked back to his seat and sat, looking straight ahead, daring the King to do anything about it.

The King seemed about to say something, but seemed to think otherwise and sat back. Whispers and hushed talks erupted thorough the room. Celen was looking at them strangely, Demenor was wriggling his hands. Harry noticed two people on one side of the room. Catching their eyes, he saluted, the old way, arms crossed above his heart, bowing forwards, well as forwards as he could while sitting. He noticed some surprise, but also acknowledgment. He smiled inwardly at this. Yes, they seemed alright. He was however surprised when he saw them salute back. He smiled a bit and nodded. Teneb had been right about it. The two people who had earned some respect from Harry, from this simple gesture, even if he still wanted to know if they were truthful or merely playing with him. These two



people were the main priest and priestess of the two cults in the elves', Magis' and Elementals' religion, the Xhan and the Xhana, as they were called. The priest in charge of Solyen's temple was Xhan Luan, and the priestess, Xhana Cya. Luan was an Elemental, a Water one, from his looks, while Cya was an elf. They were wearing the togas imposed by their religions, the only differences with normal one was theirs were a deep royal blue with a light sky blue on the hems. Both wore the medallion of their orders and their marks. Cya was an average woman, not exceptionally pretty, you would rather describe her as plain, except for her sharp metallic-blue eyes. Luan had the classical purple hair and ocean blue eyes, but his seemingly naïve face, round with freckles, was proving to give a false sense of softness, as Harry noticed small body signs, as the straight positions, the calloused large hands, the lines on his front, the tapping on his knee, the alert in his eyes, all of this was a giveaway of his true nature.

The whispers were now running full strength among the room, everybody wondering what the King would do about these two rogue riders. The King raised his hand and shot a light jet to a stone placed in the roof, illuminating the whole room.

"Tonight you saw those who will join the ranks of those protecting us. Tonight you may talk to them, learn to know them. Tomorrow, they will go to the temple to meet with the Xhan and the Xhana. Then a Ball will be held in their honor. You are all invited to come, of course. Before parting, we will share hydromelia."

He clapped in his hands and cups appeared before everyone. They were transparent, made of a strange kind of glass, and filled with a thick honey colored liquid. Sniffing it, Harry smelt roses, tea, mint and orange. He checked it magically, to be sure it hadn't been tampered with. Nothing.

The King raised his cup, followed by everyone and after raising an eyebrow at Harry, drank it, imitated by all of those present. Seeing nothing strange happening, Harry gave it a try. It was very good, slightly spiced, but refreshing. He liked it. He didn't sense or taste anything either, so he finished his cup.



“Now, meet the riders!”

Cheers broke out in the room. As everybody climbed to their feet. Then the riders stood up and went to the people waiting for them. Harry was still sitting stiffly in his chair. He saw Teneb look at his friend and father. A woman had joined said elf with a little girl. Teneb's family.

His heart tightened. There was nobody for him tonight. He was alone. No friend, and above all, no family. Smiling sadly he turned to his friend.

“Go on Teneb, they are waiting for you. I'll be fine, don't worry.”

“Don't you want to meet them. You promised.”

“I will, I promised, but first I think I shall let you meet with them. They haven't seen you for a year, and you've changed a lot.”

“...”

“Go on, I'll walk a bit in the gardens. I'll be back in an hour.”

“If you're sure...”

Harry nodded, motioning to him to go to the people looking expectantly at them.

Teneb stood up and took a few steps forwards before stopping and turning.

“Oh! And Harry, don't forget: Desen hela athia” (Death or life)

Harry smiled.

“Lith tarx jomi.” (Linked through all)

Nodding the dark-haired elf walked away, before being nearly knocked down by his sister. Grabbing her in his arms, laughing, he whirled her a bit, to her delight and his family and friend's amusement. Harry felt his throat tightened and his eyes hitch. He stood up, and with a swirl of his cloak, strode outside, to the gardens, needing to be



alone. The crowd parted before him, everyone throwing him curious, disgusted, confused, scornful, wondering looks, the feelings varying greatly, but none of them being respect, friendship or sympathy. He sighed, it was going to be two long days.

Teneb approached his family and Celen, fearing their judgment, they were the ones whose opinions he was dreading. What would he do, if they proved to share the narrow-mindedness of his people. His mother was likely to understand Harry's position, to some extent. She, as the Queen Valera, had come from Ynris, human Avalon. The elves of this community were not very well liked. They had stayed in contact with some human communities in Scotland. These communities, as a few others had kept their magic, but lost memory of the elves. They saw them as Faery, as they called them. Thus was born the original druidic community. It would live up until Arthur's time. Most of the time hidden carefully, in particular during the first millennia. The elves of Ynris stayed in contact with this community until Arthur's time. They looked over then, contacting them from time to time. It was even said that a few half-human, half-elves were born. This community kept to itself most of the time. So when the young Valera had come, with her friend, Ylesa, they were shunned, even when one of them married the King, and the other found her mate in Doryan, the King's High Counselor. His sister, she was young, she could adapt to the situation. But his father... he didn't know how he would react to his reaction.

His mother hugged him fiercely.

"I missed you so much Teneb," she whispered. "I'm proud of you, never forget that, whoever you might befriend, whatever you'll do."

"Thanks, myama." Teneb was relieved by his mother's unconditional acceptance.

"He seemed to be an honorable person, but I'll wait to see it for myself."

"That's all I can ask of you, thank you myama."

She released her son.



“You’re tired, Teneb,” she said, stroking his cheek. “And your hair is a tad too long now...”

Teneb smiled, that was his mother.

His sister, Deila, tugged at his arm.

“Teneb, who’s your friend? Why does he have strange ear? Is he sick?”

“His name is Harry, and he has weird ear because he’s a human, and no he isn’t sick, he wanted to give me time to meet back with my family...”

“He’s a weakling?”

This pained Teneb, to hear his young sister say that, as naturally as she had been talking about weather, or food.

“No, Deila, he’s not a weakling, he is my friend.”

The little girl frowned her eyebrows.

“But you said he was a human?”

“Yes, but he is a strong human.”

“Alright.”

“He’s got a small fox, he will show him to you if you want.”

“Really! And will I be able to climb on your Dragon?”

“You’ll have to ask her first, and maybe she’ll let you ride her.”

Seeing the crestfallen look on his sister’s face, he added.

“But I’m sure that if you ask politely, she will.”

“Great! Thank you Teneb.”



Teneb smiled. He had always adored his sister. Spoiling her, from his parents' point of view.

"And look, I brought you a surprise."

He rummaged in one of his pocket and took out a small glass figurine shaped as a Dragon and filled with swirling, color changing air.

The girl squealed at the sight of the present.

"And look if you say: Adessa, it will move. To stop it, say Odal."

Deila took the figurine, immediately saying the word and the little glass-dragon stretched its wing before looking up at her. It flew to her face and sniffed her, making her laugh.

Teneb, who had knelt to his sister's level, stood up and turned to his father and friend, trying to decipher their expressions.

"You changed, Teneb," his father sighed finally, "but not completely, since you're still spoiling her," he indicated Deila who was now petting the figurine who seemed to purr under the girl's ministrations. "I can't say I like all of this, but for your sake, I'll reserve my judgment. I trusted your choices before, and I still do, so I will see for myself if you did the right thing."

"Thank you father, it means a lot for me."

"Anyway, congratulations for your Athar's title. We're proud of you, it's a great honor."

Teneb nodded, smiling, before turning to Celen.

The young prince grinned at his friend.

"You remember the promise we took, years ago?"

"How could I forget?" replied Teneb.

"Well I don't intend to break it now. I'll see for myself what your friend is made of."



“Thank you, all of you,” Teneb was nearly grateful to have his family if not completely supporting him, but at least giving Harry the benefice of the doubt. “I’ve missed you so much, and I have a lot to tell...”

They settled in a more quiet place, talking about what happened. Teneb listened to the news of Horevald, and he told them about his life at the Headquarters, but left a lot of things unsaid. They weren’t ready to hear this, not yet. An hour later, he felt Harry contact him.

You have truly amazing gardens here? Did you know there was Auroria roses? And a patch of Phoenixita?

Yes, they’re grand... You can come if you want to, they are willing to give you a chance...

So nice of them.... Harry replied sarcastically.

Harry, please, it’s important for me.

I know Teneb, but I refuse to play a role for their sake, they’ll have to accept me for who I am, who I became.

And I don’t want it otherwise. So can you come? We’re in the right corner, near the stage.

I’ll be there in five minutes.

They cut their conversation and he noticed strange looks on his parents and Celen’s faces. Delia was too engrossed with her new toy to pay attention to “adult problems”.

“He will be here. He was in the gardens and he fell in love with them, in particular the Phoenixitas patch.”

Celen smiled a little, he knew the beauty of the royal gardens for having been there several times himself.

His father was looking at him strangely.

“How do you know it?”



“Our spirit guardians made us take a Blood Exchange to train us together, one of the consequence was a mind link between us.”

His father thought about it, but chose to remain silent.

Suddenly whispers started to fly in the room.

“Harry is here,” said Teneb.

The crowd parted to let him pass, people looking at him like he was oddity, some weird thing they wanted to study, or with hate, or scorn, or disbelief in most of the case.

He stopped near them.

“Teneb,” he smiled at his friend. Then he turned to the others, hesitating. He finally settled for the salute reserved to the elders: a tilt of the body forwards, palms up, and a short bow to Celen, not deep enough, considering his prince’s status but enough to show some respect.

“So, you’re Harry?” finally said Doryan.

Harry nodded sharply.

“And you must be Teneb’s parents?” he replied in a cautious tone.

“Yes, why didn’t you pledge to the King?”

It might have been a direct approach, but Doryan didn’t want to turn around for hours. Harry saw this.

“Simply, I don’t want to pledge to someone I don’t respect and trust. The King did nothing to deserve either of them, so I didn’t want to have to break such an oath.”

“Why?” Celen cut in. He wasn’t always on the best term with his father, but he admired and liked him.

“The gardens have ears,” answered Harry, mysteriously.



Doryan stayed silent. He knew the king to be extremely manipulative, and he was against it, something the King knew. He suspected that the talk he had with Demenor after having them leave must have been about both the youths before him, and he was fairly sure that it had been about way to trick them to his side. He sighed, why was this situation so complicated. He liked his son, by Solyen, he loved him. When he had seen him entered he had immediately seen the changes in him. His son had lost his illusions, that much was visible in the way he looked at his people. He had hoped to have him learn the truth slowly, but apparently, the lesson had been harshly done, and the blue eyes now held a maturity which had been absent before. He was stronger too, in every way. All in all, his partnership with this Harry seemed to have beneficiated him. He eyed the human. He looked like a bit like his son, but his eyes were older, there were a lot of things haunting him, that much he could sense. He was an excellent empath, for now the main emotions were anticipation, the human wanted to be accepted by them, but he feared he would have to play a role for that, and he didn't want to. There was also a tension, apparently inherent of his being, worry too, for Teneb, for other people he couldn't managed to identify, a desire of revenge too, annoyance. Harry fidgeted a bit under Doryan's scrutiny when he felt a tug on his leg. Looking down, he met curious blue eyes, similar to Teneb's but tinted with a bit of green.

"Are you Teny's friend?"

"Yes, I am, and who are you, lovely lady?"

"I'm not lovely lady, silly, I'm Delia," said the young girl, proudly.

"A nice name, I'm Harry."

"Teny told me, and look, he gave me Leema," she showed her figurine proudly.

"Very beautiful, let me show you something... look, nothing in the hands," he showed her his hands to prove they were empty. "But if you look closely..." he closed his right hand and put his left on it. He breathed on it.



“One, two, three!” at three he opened his hand and a red blur flew out, wheezing around Delia’s head to perched back on his hand. A glass Pegasus was pawing in his palm, his wings outstretched. He was filled with flames this time.

“Now show him your hand,” he said to Delia, amused by the awe on the younger elf’s face. Eagerly she placed her fingers near the small Pegasus. He sniffed it and, apparently pleased by it, climbed in her hands.

“Can I keep it?”

“It depends,” said Harry. “Will you take care of him?”

“Yes!”

“Then you can, say Odal to stop him and Adessa to activate him.”

“Thank you!”

“You’re welcome.”

But his last statement was lost to the girl who was now busy to present the glass dragon to the glass Pegasus. Smiling a bit, stood up and looked at Doryan and Ylesa.

“I’m sorry, I should have ask you before giving it to her, I...”

“No need,” cut Ylesa, “It was nice of you to give it to her, but now, she won’t stop bothering you and Teneb for more...”

“I don’t mind, I always wished I had some toys when I was younger, I can understand her eagerness.”

“Didn’t your parents give you some?” asked Teneb’s mother, a bit bewildered by this statement.

“I wasn’t raised by my parents,” replied Harry, shortly, “they were killed when I was one.”

This silenced her.



"I'm sorry," she finally said.

"Why?"

Harry turned his look to the young prince, piercing him.

"A Dark wizard killed them shortly before his demise. Said Dark wizard who is currently killing my people and threatening my friend's life."

The intensity in his voice startled the three of them.

Teneb was watching the exchange, silent.

"What will you do now?" Finally asked Doryan.

"I'll go back to my people. They need me, and I'll try to avoid your lands, except if a situation require my help, then I'll come. I placed myself to the orders of the Powers of this world and will answer the call of those in need. But for now, my people need help."

Doryan nodded.

"Who is this Dark wizard, I thought you said he was defeated."

"He was, but recently, he was resurrected, and he's now on his road back to full power. He's transforming into a Necromancer, gathering his power, why I'm not really sure, but it involves a ritual, a Blood ritual written in something like Doijra's diary. It requires the use of several artifact: the Cup of Ern, an Aztec ruby, Neron dagger, plus other things, but my visions were a bit confused about it..."

Doryan had paled at this, This ritual was very familiar, but he hoped with all his might that it was untrue.

"What's the name of this man, and are you sure of this?"

Harry met his eyes straightly.

"He named himself Voldemort, his true name is Tom Marvolo Riddle, and I said the truth. I would let you see for yourself, but during this



vision, he tortured and killed some Muggles, non magical people, and someone as empathic as you could not bear this,” said Harry.

“Would you let me in your mind?” Doryan asked finally.

Harry looked at him startled, before pondering over it. Teneb looked at him, torn. He sighed.

“I will let you do so, for your son’s sake, but only if you promise not to pry deeper then necessary, not that I think you could pass my barriers...”

“I won’t,” answered Doryan. He hadn’t expected him to accept. “I’ll keep myself to your superficial subconscious.”

“Alright then, but you might find things you won’t like,” Harry warned.

Doryan nodded and sent a tentative probing in Harry’s mind. First he felt like hitting a thick wall, but he sensed it dissolve. He entered and watched as scenes unfolded before him. He sensed the human was watching him and filtrating the emotions coming with the scenes, knowing that his empathy wouldn’t be able to take that much in one time.

A few minutes later, he had seen enough.

Once he was back, he turned a scathing look towards Demenor who was talking with the King, then he looked at his son and Harry, whose face was now completely closed as he composed himself.

“I want the full story.”

Harry looked at Teneb.

“Father, we’d rather not discuss it here, maybe later, in a more private place.”

Doryan nodded, still angered at some things he had seen. He was more angered by what his son had endured, but he also felt something akin to pity for the human. He could see that his behavior



with Delia had earned him his mate's respect, after all, someone who was liked by children couldn't be bad, at least, in Ylesa's mind.

"Teneb, I'm proud of your choice, but it'll take me some time to completely accept it. I've years of prejudice to erase, I hope you can understand it." Teneb nodded, relieved. Doryan turned to Harry.

"I can't say that I'll be able to trust all the humans, but you earned some of my respect, don't lose it. Don't expect me to radically change my attitude, it'll take time for me to overcome old reflexes."

"That's more than I expected in coming here," said Harry, bowing in thanks. Teneb's father was someone he could learn to respect.

"Yes, I can understand," said Doryan.

Celen had remained silent during the whole exchange.

"Harry..." the young wizard looked at the prince who had to refrain from shuddering under the intensity of those eyes. "If you can give me a chance, I'm willing to give you one," he stretched out his hand.

Harry looked at it cautiously, pondering over the offer. Once again, Teneb's look convinced him; tentatively, he took the offered hand and was rewarded by a small smile on Celen's face and a wide one from Teneb.

"Now, where will you stay Harry?"

"I planned on sleeping with my horse outside."

"Nonsense! You'll come with us! You can come too, Celen, this way, you may learn to know Harry better," interrupted Ylesa.

"Are you saying that because you feel like you must, or because you want to?" asked Harry, his face guarded.

"Both," Teneb's mother answered truthfully.

"Then I'll accept your offer, and I thank you for your hospitality."

Doryan spoke up.



“Well, this will be the talk of the castle for the week... Be careful with the court tomorrow, you’ll probably be approached by the different groups, I’ll tell you a bit more of our politics, to help you.”

“Thank you, Osyran.” Osyran was the old term for High Counselor. It seemed to please Doryan to hear it, and Harry was once again thankful for the language lessons Arxeren gave him, no matter how hard it was to learn Xehnian’s language. Xehnians were the Ancients, the common ancestor of the elves, humans, Magis, Elementals, Veelas, Vampires, Werewolves...

See I told you, you’d come to see the use of these lessons...

Arxeren, it’s been a long time...

Well, we were busy with this block-problem. And speaking of that, I must go, we still haven’t found anything about them... The council and we are working on it... Call me if you need my help.

Harry decided against joking, Arxeren seemed really preoccupied.

Alright, good luck.

To you too, oh! And be careful with Najira, don’t trust her, no matter what.

What?!

But Arxeren had already left.

He shrugged, and turned his attention back to Doryan.

“I’m sorry, my guardian wanted to tell me something.”

“Well, I asked you if you wanted to leave.”

Harry thought about before nodding.

“Yes, if it isn’t too much to ask. And you don’t have to worry about people spreading this talk around, I placed a Privacy Enchantment, nobody heard us.”



“Good, well thought. You can leave with Teneb, Deila and maybe Celen. Ylesa and I will meet you in our house. And then we’ll talk.”

The youths nodded. Harry waved his hand and Teneb felt something disappear. The young human started to walk towards the exit, after saluting Teneb’s parents. Teneb took Delia in his arms and was about to follow his friend.

He was barely a few meters away, when Teneb, his parents, Celen, and of course Harry heard one of the talks going on. During their discussion, they hadn’t heard them, thanks to Harry’s Privacy Charm. The room was buzzing with chatter.

A Magis and an elf were discussing together, not very discreetly, unaware that the silence was slowly falling around them.

“So how do you think it’s possible he got that much powers?” Said the elf.

“I’m sure he’s a bastard... It’s not possible that two low bred humans got a child that powerful.”

“You’re right, his mother must have cheated on his father and got herself pregnant with someone else... What else could you expect from humans? But with who?”

“I hear he’s from Scotland, so my guess is that it must be one of those of Ynris who got her pregnant...”

“Yeah... that’s it, even if I can’t understand how an elf could fall so low as to impregnate a human woman. It’s disgusting...”

Teneb, was fearing for their life. As he had heard the first words, Harry had stopped dead in his tracks. If there was a subject on which he was extremely sensitive, it was his family and friends. He couldn’t blame him. First he was an orphan and second Teneb couldn’t help but admire the fact that his parents sacrificed themselves for him. Harry had tensed up, as they had gone on, the elf had felt the fire power gather in his friend, whose closed fists were now trembling under the efforts he was doing not to let his energy loose. Teneb had seen Harry lose control over his powers before and didn’t look



forwards seeing it again, not in a crowded room. He handed Delia to his confused father.

“Father, shield this room with the strongest enchantment you know, I’m not sure I’ll manage to calm him down quickly enough to prevent him from exploding.” He saw the confusion on his father’s face. “Quick, he’s a fire gifted.” Understanding dawned on the older elf and he cursed slightly, while waving his hand lightly, having paled considerably. Teneb rushed to his friend as he heard the last sentence. He winced, he would probably be too late. As he thought that, Harry’s aura flared up, engulfing him in a cloud of flame, drawing shrieks and cries in the room. Apparently Demenor had seen it too. As he started to run in their direction, shouting to some Elementals masters to come.

“Teneb, don’t approach him,” he cried, “He’ll kill you.”

“No, never, but if you come closer, he’ll lose what little control he still has.”

While saying that he saw Harry approached the two people.

“But, now, if you don’t mind, I’ll go stop him, before he fries those two idiots.”

Without waiting for an answer, he rushed after his friend, using his mental link.

Come on Harry! Don’t do that!

They insulted my parents again!

Teneb could feel the rage behind those words. He turned to the two quivering responsible of this outburst.

“Apologize, NOW!” he barked, “unless you want to finish roasted.”

They stuttered some apologies, not comprehensible.

See... They apologized...



It didn't change the situation

"Harry, they're not even worth it..."

"My parents are dead."

"Yes, but do you think they would want you to kill those fools? Those idiots who have nothing left but their petty quest for small crumbs of power."

Harry blinked a few times, and Teneb could sense that he was starting to regain his senses back.

His aura died down, and the tension which had filled the atmosphere decreased.

"This one was low, Teneb," he said, tensed. "But I won't stand for more insults against my parents. I won't break the Rules or my oath, but I'll find a way to have revenge should I hear one more comment against them."

"As every son would do."

Harry turned to his Blood Brother, smiling.

"Thank you for calming me down, I don't think I would have been able to do so myself."

He looked around.

"I apologize for this outburst."

He then resumed his walk towards the exit.

Teneb sighed, sensing the distress of his friend. He knew he was going to release some of his tension away from prying eyes. He went back to his father, taking Delia back in his arm.

"What was that?" asked his father.

"Harry is a fire gifted, he has usually a great control over his power, which explains why none of the masters are dead, but he can't stand



insults against what he considers his family: his parents, his friends, and those he respects.”

“I can see that... Are you sure you’ll be safe?” said Ylesa.

“Mamya, he isn’t dangerous. I’d trust him with my life. He’s an orphan so his parents are a very touchy subject, he loves them a lot, as would any orphan. Moreover they died protecting him, scarifying themselves for him. So you understand why he won’t tolerate remarks against them.”

Ylesa’s eyes shone with compassion at this.

“Yes, I can understand his reaction.”

“Well, we’ll go, now, he isn’t feeling very well and he must have calmed down completely,” said Teneb. “Celen? Are you coming?”

“Are you sure he won’t mind?”

“He agreed to give you a chance, so no, he won’t. Just be careful.”

They walked outside, followed by every eyes.

Demenor had seen everything and was now completely lost about what to do. He didn’t know to make things right anymore. He had failed everybody and everything in which he had believed, how could he ever look in a mirror again? He had seen how Teneb had calmed Harry, and it only made him aware of the fact that it should have been him to be able to do this. Had he been a good mentor, he would have been able to see all that happened. The young wizard would have come to him, confided in him. He looked around. He couldn’t say more to the King, the man would only used it for his own profit. He had hope for Celen when he had seen him and the human shake hands. He only hoped that the prince was sincere. The Queen, well she was good, she had always been the one to have some control over her husband. She would have made a great ruler. His eyes fell on the Xhan. It had been years since he had gone to the temple. Tomorrow, he would talk to Xhan Luan, and then he’d do his duty.



The King had seen everything. Well not everything was lost. He'd tried to convince Celen to help him in driving the human to him... But the problem was that Valera had made Celen extremely honest and had taught him well some moral principle, but maybe he could make him see it was for the better if the human was bonded to his service, on his free will or against it. Anyway, he would use other means if it didn't work, and he was sure Celen would refuse. Yes it was better not to even ask him, it would make him suspicious. He would use the weakness every male shared. He motioned to one of the servant.

"Tell Najira, to come to my office in an hour."

The servant nodded and left.

He smiled. Yes, this would work, and anyway, there was still the potion in case everything failed.

A calculating smile appeared on his face as he watched Teneb and his son leave the room.

Valera watched the scene unfold before her. This human, this Harry, he was familiar. At least his eyes were. As she thought about it, she suddenly knew she had to help him. What the King didn't know was that her parents' side held a large number of Seers. And while she hadn't inherited the gift, she had received a small part, which enabled her to know what she had to do. It was a sort of sixth sense that she always trusted. It had made her teach Celen morals, and take care of a large part of his education, even if it was generally a prerogative reserved to the father. She had also chosen the people educating him with this sense. She had even taught him a bit about humans. She knew her husband was up to something, she could nearly see the wheels in his head. When she had married him she had thought she was wedding the greatest man on earth, then, he had changed. After seventy years, she barely recognized him, the change was brutal. By this time she was pregnant with Celen. At first she attributed this change to the disappearance of his twin brother. But now, she wasn't sure anymore. Then Najira had come, and she hadn't been able to look at him in the same way, she couldn't even share his bed anymore.



She would talk to this Harry tomorrow, there was something... Something which was going to happen...

She sighed. As she heard her husband asking for Najira she couldn't repress a shudder of dread. Yes, something terrible was about to happen.

Doryan didn't remain for long. He was asked several questions about the relationship between his son and the human. He pretended to be as lost and confused as everyone. Then, as quickly as possible, he excuse himself and left for his house.

His house was situated near the castle. It was more like a manor and had been in the family for years. The building was completely hidden by trees, you could only see the tower. It was elegant looking, with delicate arches and finely chiseled sculptures. The entrance hall was huge, with lots of windows, making it very light. On the sides you could see tapestries retracing the main facts of the family's history. Several painting of some ancestors as well as landscapes were hung too. On both sides a corridor left to the other parts of the manor. Their was several bedrooms, bathrooms. A ballroom, a dining room, two playrooms, several workroom whether for paperwork or physical work, a big library, and a laboratory. Outside you could find a huge park, stables, paddocks, some greenhouses, and a small chapel. The interior was decorated with taste, Ylesa's work. Both adults went directly to the living room and found the three youths and Deila near the fireplace. Well, Harry was currently working with a piece of paper, bending it. Soon it took the shape of a bird. He placed it in Delia's hand and told her to close her eyes.

As she did so, he passed his hand over the paper-bird and told her to open her eyes. She squealed as she saw the beautiful dove, now staring at her with its black eyes.

She petted its head. Then Harry told her a few words and she nodded. Standing up, they both went to a window and opening it, Delia set the bird free. With a trill of thanks, it flew away. Seeing the quite sad look on the little girl's face, Harry took his bag and soon a ginger head sprouted of it. Followed by the body of a young fox. By the actual height of the animal, Doryan could tell that it would reach above



average proportion. After a few moment of sniffing, the young beast licked Delia's fingers, thus drawing coos from the girl who started to pet him, something he seemed to enjoy greatly.

Doryan smiled at the happy scenery, yes, he could see why Teneb had chosen to side with this youth. Said Teneb and Celen were watching smiling at the two others. Celen was a bit disorientated, why would someone take pleasure in playing with a small child? But he enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere nonetheless.

Clearing his throat, Teneb's father made his presence known.

"Were you waiting for a long time?"

"Not really," said Teneb, "We had to take our horses and bags before coming. We've been here for half an hour."

"Well, young girl, I think it's time you and I go to bed and leave the boys to talk."

"Mamya, look at what Harry did!"

She showed her some figurines of various animals.

"Very nice Delia, now what about going to bed and putting these figurine on your bedpost?"

"Yes! Good night!" with that she ran to the nearest staircase.

Smiling, the others bad good night to Ylesa as she left to follow her daughter.

"Now, what about this story Teneb?" said Dryan, settling in a comfy armchair.

Teneb looked at Harry.

"You can tell him everything you want Teneb. He'll need to know... He can ask me questions, if he wants some details after you're done."

Reassured, Teneb started his tale, which would keep them up for a big part of the night.



Well, I hope you enjoyed this chapter!

Thanks again to all the reviewers

Next chapter will be the last one before Harry's return to his world. I don't know when I'll post it, due to the reasons I stated in my note at the beginning... I hope you can understand this. Anyway I WON'T STOP writing this. I greatly enjoy it and it is now a real passion for me. There might be small updates, on the others stories, but nothing near this length.

Naia



## Chapter Eighteen

They stayed up late into the night, retelling their stay at the Headquarters. They left out a few parts or softened some. No matter how accepting Teneb's parents seemed to be, they weren't ready to hear everything. However, no matter how softened their story was, it still left Ysela who had come back and Doryan disbelieving.

Upon looking at them, Harry sighed.

"We should go to sleep, this day was quite eventful, and tomorrow is promising to be even more."

Wordlessly, both adults nodded, not realizing they were, in a way, obeying him, still too shocked by what they had just heard. They left the room, forgetting about the three youths, still going over what had just been said.

Harry leaned forwards putting his head in his hands. He was tired. The day had been extremely taxing on him physically, but above all mentally.

A hand on his shoulder startled him. He looked up and relaxed upon seeing his friend's face.

"You should follow your own advice, Harry."

Nodding tiredly, Harry stood up and stretched, yawning.

"Follow me, I'll show you your room; Celen, you have your usual bedroom."

Harry turned to look at the prince, having completely forgotten about him, lost as he was down Memory Lane.

"Alright, Teneb," he turned to Harry, "I don't know what to think, part of me wants to yell that this whole mess is a joke, but it isn't; I'm not that stupid. I just... need time to think this over..."

Harry nodded, as the heir of Horevald left the room.



“Teneb, I need to leave soon.... I shouldn’t even be there. I should be with my friends... I should be there, helping them, not sitting here and trying to make people see something they don’t want to...”

The young elf placed his hand back on Harry’s shoulder.

“Harry, we already talked about this, you need to be a full fledged rider if you want to use your rider-powers to their fullest.”

“I know Teneb, but I have a bad feeling... I shouldn’t be here...”

“How is the channel working?”

“Well, I don’t have vision-nightmares anymore and in the mornings I have access to the visions stored by the channel...”

Harry didn’t linger on it and Teneb knew that those visions must have been pretty bad.

“He is up to something... He did a lot of things these past few days, a lot of rituals...”

“What type of rituals?”

“Believe me you don’t want to know about them... They’re Blood rituals.”

“Is he raising the Dead?”

“He’s been trying for a while, he managed to complete some of the lesser Necromantic incantations, with more or less success, but he still doesn’t have enough power.”

“I thought he was turning into a Necromancer?”

“He is, but he was not gifted with Necromantic abilities, he’s learning, but doesn’t have the gift.”

“This is good then...”

“Teneb, he doesn’t need to be a full Necromancer to complete the vilest incantations, as long as he gathers enough energy to keep



himself in the Lands of Living, that's the danger when you're not a gifted Necromancer. A true Necromancer can use the spiritual energies around him to raise the dead, but in this case, the Dark Lord has to tap into his own reserves and no matter how powerful he is, he doesn't have the power required for the hardest summons... Moreover, the energy he must gather has to be, let's say..., compatible with the type of summon."

"What?"

Harry sighed, remembering the lesson Arxeren had taught him.

"Well, Necromancy relies a lot on the user's intent. If you want to use your power for Good, to right a wrong, to seek a truth, put a soul to rest, or any other positive action, you will rely on positive energies. These energies are very potent, but hard to gather: it's the energy from love, compassion, willing sacrifice, life. On the other hand if you use your Necromantic talents to maim, hurt, kill, torture, you'll rely on dark energies. They're easier to gather or to obtain: it's the energy of hate, greed, envy, death, pain... If you torture someone to death, for example, you'll collect a great deal of energy from his pain and passing, this energy is highly unstable but potent in a certain way." Harry took a deep breath, looking at Teneb to find him focused on his words. He resumed his lecture, repressing a smile. Ron would have had an attack; he was really turning into a mini-Hermione... The thought of his friends made him feel a pang of homesickness. He squashed this feeling, now wasn't the moment... He focused back on his explanation.

"That's why Necromancers are so frowned upon; they're easily corrupted by the Dark energies. Should they use them once, they won't be able to stop. Add to this that the temptation of resorting to the use of Dark energies is really hard to fight. If you look in history records, you'll only read about Dark Necromancers; Light Necromancers were extremely rare, and most of the time, were outcasts, never really trusted because of the exactions of the Dark ones. The fact is that Dark energy makes the practice of Necromancy a lot more easier."

"Alright, but how do you know all of this? Are you one of them?"



“No, and I don’t plan on learning the Art, but you know the phrase: “Know your enemy”.” Harry yawned again.

“Come on, Harry, let’s sleep, you’ll worry about this tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow, I’ll go back to my world.”

They didn’t say more. Teneb led his friend through a few corridors and stopped before a door.

“Here is your room, mine is on the right, and Celen is two rooms on your left.”

“OK, good night.”

“Good night Harry.”

--

Harry fell fast asleep and found himself attracted to the Spirit Plane. Sometimes, when his guardian wanted to see him, he summoned his charge to the plane.

Arxeren?

Harry, you’re alright! Well, of course you are...

Harry’s spiritual form frowned; he had never seen his guardian like this... Arxeren might have been slightly crazy, not to say completely loony, but he rarely babbled or rambled.

Arxeren?                      What’s                      the                      problem?  
The Draconian guardian sent him a sharp look.

Things are a mess up there and down there... The Council is currently judging the actions of the riders and the punishments which shall be given. I can tell you it’s getting bloody there... Arxeren shuddered, Down here we’re trying to solve this blocks’ problem. You, you do have a talent to attract troubles...

I know and don’t try to change the subject...



Arxeren sighed.

The blocks are different for you and Teneb. Yours seems to twist your magic, dampening it. It's strange, at first we thought it was Voldemort's curse rebounding on you which had modified your magic, blocking it in a special way, forcing your body to build other channels, but their structure doesn't make any sense if this was the cause of this alteration. You also seemed to have a block over something, before the curse hit you... I just know that should we take them off, your magic will be greatly affected by it, I don't know how, but to simplify it, your body will have too many channels for magic: the ones you had naturally at your birth even if they weren't fully developed and the ones which were created afterwards and that you've been using since them. To clear everything, you're an enigma...

Harry repressed a smile at his guardian annoyed face. Arxeren seemed to hold him responsible of this...

Could my mother's sacrifice have something to do with it?

We don't know, maybe, maybe not... As for Teneb's, the blocks are ancient, they're not wowed in his personal magic, but in his basic being. They're not blocking his magic, we're sure of that, they might be making its use a bit harder, but not that much. They're cutting him from a part of himself, they are blocking some abilities characteristic of what he is. He had something else too, something similar to one of yours but not exactly identical...

Alright... Is there a signature on the blocks? Can we take them down?

It's more complicated than this... We haven't seen something like this before; we don't know what the disappearance of those blocks will do. We investigated a bit, there are no signatures on both of them, but the fact is that almost every elf, Magi or Elemental bear Teneb's type of block. This is a complete mess, and up there they are trying to understand why they were placed and how to right the situation...

OK.....



Harry, I want your word on this, you won't try anything about those blocks, leave that to us, there too much at stake right now.

Harry was a bit peeved at being order around, but he had enough problems as it was.

I won't for now, I enough on my plate without adding that.

Arxeren gave him a draconian smile.

Great, Be careful tomorrow Harry...

And why should I, O wise one?

He then realized that Arxeren was gone...

Pff! No need to go all mysterious on me...

Seeing he was already on the first plane, he decided to go see his parents. He wanted to tell them of his bonding.

He couldn't go to the Soul Plane often, it was taxing, so he cherished each time he could.

He had gone a few times already and it was always very soothing for him to talk to his parents, he had even got to meet his grandparents once.

He reached into the structure of the Spirit Plane for the thread which was connected to his personal aura and gave the power word.

"Semreh."

Immediately he felt the now familiar buzz of a Pagat. It was a non-corporeal being, barely conscious and the reason why the transfers to the Spiritual Plane were taxing: this being fed on your energy, and more precisely your emotions and magic.

If you were on good terms with them, they only took a small bit of energy. But should you antagonized them, the transfer would cost you a lot... Harry had followed Arxeren's advice and from time to time gave them some energy. Sure, it took him some time to replenish his



reserves, but when he decided to ask for a transfer, the Pagats were very complacent with him. Another characteristic of the Pagats was their curiosity. Most of the time, Harry indulged them, letting them see some of his memories from the wizarding or the muggle world. These creatures had never heard of it before, so they were always probing at his mind during the transfer; they never forced the contact, but Harry had to give it to the small beings, they were persistent.

He opened his mind, letting the being sense his welcome. The Pagat was a misty being, which seemed to be made of smoke, but Harry could sense the power in this small colored puff of smoke. The being rang interrogatively. It was their way of communicating; Harry found it sounded like bells ringing. Harry let his desire come to the surface of his mind, showing the Pagat what he wanted.

With an amused ringing sound, the Pagat stretched and mist surrounded Harry. He let himself be swept by the being. During the journey, he felt the probe and chose to display his Quidditch match against Slytherin in his third year.

He sensed the being's amusement at the scene playing in his mind and smiled a bit, sometimes he thought they were like children... Soon he found himself in the Spirit Plane.

He looked around, trying to recognize someone.

"Harry!"

He whirled to come to face with his father and finding himself hugged tightly, well, as tightly as you can when in spiritual form.

"Dad, is mum here too?"

"Yes, I'll call her..." he had a faraway look for a few instant. "So, son, any news since last time?"

"Well, quite a few things happened, but I'd rather wait for Mum before telling."

"Alright..."



Suddenly the form of a woman formed next to James Potter.

"Hello Harry, how are you?"

"Fine mum."

"So, what's going on?"

"Well, I bonded..."

He found himself in a tight embrace before he could finish his sentence.

"Harry, that's wonderful! We're so proud!"

The young wizard smiled a bit.

"Yes, I bonded with a Sowaroc, Rexeran."

This seemed to leave both of his parents speechless. Harry smiled at their shocked, but missed an angry flash in their eyes at the name of the dragon.

"This is ... great, Harry, we are extremely proud of you," Lily said finally.

"What I'm prouder of is your revenge! I can't wait for it to take place!!"

Lily smiled in relief; you could count on James to change subjects!

Harry didn't seem to mind and soon father and son were involved in a prank-discussion. Finally she coughed loudly.

"So Harry what else happened?"

Harry looked at them slowly.

"A lot."

He then proceeded to retell every event of the day, down to the King's actions, Teneb's family's reactions... His parents had the awaited reactions: he smiled at their anger at the actions of the



Daryns, at The King, their relief at hearing about Teneb's family's attitude. His bad feelings about Voldemort, the rituals he had seen through his vision on the other hand worried them.

"Well, Harry, I don't what to say... Just that you must go back as soon as you can. We can't say much to you, but as soon as everything is completed, you need to go back."

Harry looked up at hearing the urgency in his mother's voice.

"There is a ball tonight, must I go?"

"Yes, your rider status will be definitively confirmed at the end of the ball, but leave as soon as you can, your friends need you."

"I know that, it's been killing me to have to stay here, I thought once I was bonded it would be over!"

"It's not that simple Harry..." said James.

"I know," the dark haired young man answered dejectedly. "Teneb explained it to me, but I can't stop thinking about them... I should be with them, not with Elfish prejudiced hypocrites, or back-stabbers!"

"Harry," James passed his hand through his hair, well his misty hair... "You're going to need all the powers your rider-status will give you."

Harry nodded.

"Well, I shall go now."

"Yes, you'll need rest, and don't forget to eat enough each day and to get enough sleep... And for god's sake drop that self-pity act!"

Harry smiled a bit at this.

"Yes mum, well, I'm going to go rest... by the way, Teneb bonded with an Emnag, Gae is her name, I think. Bye."

"Bye, sweetheart," uttered Lily, "Sweet dreams..."



With a smile, Harry slowly faded away, and let himself fall into peaceful slumber.

Lily turned to her husband, a deep frown etched on her face.

"I don't care about their games, I won't let them use my son. They will answer me!"

Knowing better than trying to reason his wife, James Potter nodded and with a soft pop they were gone.

--

The night passed uneventfully and Harry was woken up by the sun rays at dawn. Apparently, his bed was placed so that the first rays would hit the pillow.

Groaning he stood up; having no reason to stay in bed now that he was awake. He dressed slowly and went out of the room. He looked around, a bit disoriented, but decided to head for the living room.

"Harry!"

He whirled on his heels, startled, but smiled at the dark haired elf.

"Good morning Teneb."

"Good morning Harry. Ready for today?"

"As I'll ever be."

"Good, now, I think breakfast is waiting for us."

Teneb led them to another room. As he stepped in, he noticed that Doryan and Ysela were already here. Saluting them, he sat near Teneb. Celen came a few minutes later after a few words he sat on the other side of Teneb. Breakfast was a silent affair, until Delia arrived. She ran to her parents, hugging them, then came to Teneb, kissing him soundly on the cheek, before doing the same, albeit a little less exuberantly for Celen, and then turned to Harry.



Ysela had been looking at the young human as her young daughter entered; she had noticed his smile at the young girl's actions. She took in the sad look in his eyes as he watched the family display. She recalled that he had been orphaned at a young age. As Delia kissed Celen, she saw him sigh and go back to his food. Her heart tightened. She didn't know why, but she felt sympathy for this young human. Coming from Ynris, she wasn't as prejudiced as most elves were. The inhabitants of Ynris weren't appreciated a lot among the Elfish population. They were frowned upon for their long cohabitation with humans. She had integrated but the first years had been difficult for her. She was then startled to see her daughter approach the young wizard and tug at his robes.

The human looked up, then down at the small elvish girl. She watched as he bent down and took her on his lap. He was handling her as if she was made of crystal and ready to break at any moment. Delia kissed his cheek tentatively, chirping a good morning. Ysela had to smile at the brilliant grin that slowly appeared on his face. He bent down and whispered something in Delia's ear that sent her in laughing fits. She jumped from his lap and bounced to her chair.

Ysela looked at Harry, took in the small smile still etched on his features, the now twinkling green eyes... She frowned, those eyes, they were familiar... She had already seen someone with this shade of green, a long time ago, when she was still a little girl... Valera had been there too... But then, shaking her head, she dismissed those thoughts and turned to her son.

"Teneb, I'm sorry to ask this of you, I know you're going to have a long day, but if you could go hunting before going to the castle, I would be really grateful... Your father didn't have the time with all the preparations that had to be done. Celen and Harry could go with you."

Shrugging, Teneb turned to his friends. Celen nodded and Harry shrugged.

"Alright mother, we will be able to work our horses out this way."

"Can I come?! Please mum."



“Delia, a hunt is too dangerous!”

“But mum...”

“No young lady, and no sulking.”

Delia seemed to understand that arguing would get her nowhere as she nodded before asking to be excused. Nodding her consent, Ysela eyed suspiciously her young daughter. She had been too quick to agree, usually they argued for at least ten minutes.

Teneb stood up.

“Well mum, we need to be going if we want to be back early enough.”

“Go boys and be careful.”

They headed towards the paddock where they had placed their horses.

Ten minutes later they were leaving. Teneb and Celen had their bows ready, Harry was carrying some spears, his archery skills weren't up to this type of challenge, and he had given up on trying to improve them. He was more into close combat: fencing and magical dueling were his forte. He wasn't that bad at throwing knives, but if he could avoid to use them, then it was all the better. As for the bow, even with the one the dwarves had offered him, he was nothing more than average.

They walked for a moment, warming up their horses before starting to trot. From time to time, Teneb and Celen would draw their bows and had now gathered their fair share of game-birds... None of them had crossed bigger preys, but didn't mind. They let their mounts fall in a lazy canter, enjoying the ride through the forest. Celen was mounting his young mare, Dawn. Why she had been called like this, Harry couldn't even begin to fathom, the mare had nothing which could relate her to the dawn... She was looking a lot like Myst, as they shared the father. Her coat was a dark bay with four white sockets and a patch of white between her eyes. She wasn't as temperamental as Teneb's stallion but had the same strength and speed.



The scenery was peaceful, the nature slowly awaking. Suddenly the silence was broken by a scream. They immediately stopped their horses.

“What was this!” said Celen.

“I don’t know, but...”

Another scream interrupted Harry. Teneb was looking wildly around trying to locate the origin of the scream.

Before he could pinpoint the location, another scream was heard.

“It’s coming from this way,” he said hurriedly.

Nodding, Harry raised his hand.

“Lead me!”

A beam of pink light shot up from his hand and drew a path between the trees. This was a variation of the “point me” spell Teneb and he had come up. It was quite useful when you got lost, but required a great deal of concentration as you had to have your destination perfectly in mind, as well as knowing the general direction of the place you wanted to reach. Immediately, he urged Shadow forwards. The stallion instantly broke into an easy gallop. They followed the pink thread, dodging trees, jumping over bushes. Harry was only focused on his ride and didn’t see Teneb slow down to allow Celen to follow them...

After one or two minutes, he was nearly jerked off his mount’s back as the stallion reared, neighing fearfully.

Forcing it back on four legs, Harry looked around trying to find the cause of his horse’s fear... The pink thread was throbbing in front of them.

“Come on Shadow...” He said through gritted teeth, trying to communicate his worries, his will to his mount.



Hesitantly, Shadow took a few steps forwards, Harry patting his neck, encouraging him. Allowing his rider to push him in a quick trot, the stallion kept shaking his head, looking nervously around, breathing heavily, his eyes showing a little bit of white.

Finally Harry arrived in a small glade and immediately understood his horse's nervousness. A massive hog was readying itself to charge. Harry shuddered: the beast was huge even for its kind. His fur showed he was an old male and from his scars, one that had fought quite a lot and won. Hearing a small whimper on his right, the young wizard's head whirled to see the sound's origin.

His heart froze as he saw the small form of Delia, huddled against a tree, her small frame shaking, her eyes wide with fear, her mouth opened in a silent scream. A few meters away, laid her pony, his flanks rising with apparent difficulty as he tried to breathe.

The hog chose this moment to lunge at the small girl.

Harry didn't think twice, a spear shot towards the beast, hitting its shoulder and making it stumble, falling down with a grunt. Harry dismounted, leaving Shadow, knowing that even if the stallion left he would be able to call him back. He ran towards Delia, relieved to see her uninjured. Taking her in his arms, he tried to reassure her, but soon noticed she had fainted. Holding her limp form in his arms, he suddenly heard a thumping noise. His head shooting towards the noise, he felt his eyes widened as he saw the hog running towards him. He cursed. He couldn't use magic, the elvish laws forbidden it for the hunt. If there was one thing the masters had taught him was that every Elvish kingdom obeyed to this rule, no magic against animals to harm except if the animal was being controlled or if it was a Dark creature after your blood... The results of doing otherwise would be... nasty to say the least.

He took out one his small throwing knives and threw it, praying to slow down the beast a bit, to be able to move Delia and him out of the way. The blade hit the joint between shoulder and neck. Harry knew the blade was much too thin to do a lot of damage but it would distract it for a few precious seconds, hopefully. The hog faltered a bit in his charge, buying Harry several precious seconds. Gathering the body



of Delia in his arms, he rolled out of the way and pushed the young girl away, out of the animal's view, into the bushes. He barely had the time to roll away again as the hog ran toward him again.

Standing up, he ran away towards Shadow who was still waiting, if he could jump on his stallion, he would be safe, and they would drive it away.

Distracted, he didn't see the small rabbit hole, tripped on it and fell flat on his face. Hearing the thumping again he knew he couldn't escape this time... He nearly laughed at the irony of the whole thing: he was going to die, stomped over by a wild beast... Suddenly two arrows wheezed above his head and he heard a shrill cry.

Looking behind him, he saw the hog, withering on the ground, an arrow firmly planted in one of his eyes, the other deep in his neck.

He sighed, this one had been close... Glancing up, he saw Teneb and Celen on their horses, their bows still drawn on the hog.

Shakily, Harry stood up. He was trembling and sweating but his worry went to the small girl, what had she been doing here?

"Teneb, Celen, thank you."

"No need Harry, we would have been here sooner, but we lost you and none of us is really great at aura-tracking..."

Harry shrugged it off.

"You were there on time, that's the essential... But next time if you could be here a few seconds earlier, it would spare me some gray hairs..."

Teneb smirked at this, and was about to retort something but Harry cut him.

"Teneb, what was your sister doing here?"

The smirk vanished from his face.



“What?!”

“Delia, she was the one screaming, I pushed her out of the way, in those bushes but she was unconscious...”

Harry had barely finished his sentence that Teneb was on his feet, running towards the bushes he had been pointing at.

Celen followed his friend’s example, albeit a bit more calmly and tied the reins of his horse to a tree’s branch.

He walked to Harry.

“Celen?”

“Yes,” the prince was looking at him expectantly.

“Could you check on the pony, I’m going to finish it off,” the young wizard pointed to the agonizing hog.

Nodding, the Elven heir walked to the still lying pony which was quite worrisome.

With a swift motion of his dagger, Harry cut the hog’s throat. The beast died with a last grunt. Cleaning his hands against the fur, Harry pondered over the task of bringing the carcass back to Teneb’s home, they couldn’t waste it.

“H-Harry?”

He turned and saw Celen motioning for him to come. Both of them were still cautious around each other: polite, courteous but not overly friendly. They were still trying to measure each other up, but Harry had a feeling that he could learn to like the prince if the young Elf could see beyond his prejudices as he seemed willing to.

The prince shot a glance at Teneb who had his sister in his arm. The girl was now conscious and sobbing in her brother’s arms. Lowly, so that they didn’t hear them, he spoke.



“It’s bad, Garyn had his ribcage completely broken; the hog must have hit him full strength on his side. One rib pierced the lung, another scratched the heart, causing internal bleeding, other organs were hit, either by some ribs, or during his fall. He also broke one of his leg.”

Harry bit his tongue at the injuries’ list.

“Can you heal him?”

Celen shook his head sadly.

“No, my healing abilities aren’t that great, I can do most of external wounds and broken bones, but not internal injuries on so many organs. You?”

“No, my healing abilities are weak, Teneb has got more power and he has the gift...”

“Let’s ask him.”

“I’ll do it, wait a second.”

*Teneb?*

Yes, the tone was wary.

*How far do your healing skills go?*

*Let’s hear what the problem is is...*

Harry started to list the injuries. He was speaking of the heart’s scratching when Teneb stopped him.

*Stop here, there’s no need to go further, I cannot yet heal heart-injuries, maybe later, once my training is over, but for now I’m still learning how to treat internal injuries; mostly hemorrhages, lungs, digestives organs..*

*Then, Garyn won’t survive, we can’t leave him here, moving him would just make the matter worse and we don’t have enough time to fetch help.*



He felt Teneb sighed...

*We don't have a choice left, it seems. Delia will be crushed, but...*

Teneb didn't finish his sentence but Harry understood what his friend meant.

He broke from the mental talk and looked at the prince.

"Teneb can't heal him."

Apparently, Celen had been anticipating it as he merely nodded.

"I'll put him to sleep..." he simply said, placing his hand on the pony's flank.

Harry nodded.

He felt Celen draw his power out and shut out the pony's living functions. It wasn't painful, the pony simply fell asleep, but he wouldn't wake up.

It was so easy to do, gather your power, find the right place in the brain and push. The more powerful you were the less power you had to use. So easy, so simple: a simple push, an overload of power on the brain, shutting the functions down. No cries, no traces. The person fell, apparently asleep, but in reality dead. The same technique could be used to put someone to sleep; it was just a question of power. With a human, you just had to pass his shields to access his inner being, that was the only difficulty.

This power, it was dizzying, to know you could kill with a simple thought, well not quite, but close... The power of Life and Death. Harry broke this train of thought with a shake of his head.

He walked to Teneb.

"Teneb, we should go, your parents will be worried."



His friend nodded, his sister still in arms. He stood up and walked to his horse. After placing his sister on Myst's back, he jumped on his mount and waited for Harry and Celen to mount.

Harry placed a Levitating Charm on the hog's body, before climbing on Shadow as Celen was mounting Dawn.

"What about?" said Teneb, his eyes still on the pony's body.

Harry extended his arm, releasing his element. The body was engulfed in a huge flame, so hot that the body disappeared in a few couple of seconds... The fire extinguished itself as quickly as it had flared up, only leaving a black circle in the grass.

Silently, the three youths directed their horses towards the house, the hog's body floating behind them. The ride back was uneventful. Delia was sleeping, her body leaning against her brother's chest, clearly exhausted.

Soon they were back.

--

Upon seeing the manor, they immediately spotted Ysela and Doryan waiting for them. Teneb's mother seemed frantic. They urged their horses a bit, quickening their walk.

Delia was still sleeping in her brother's arms.

Ysela's face relaxed in relief when she caught sight of her daughter in Teneb's arm.

Her relief was short lived as she turned to her son, anger passed on her feature.

"Teneb! I thought I made myself clear! She wasn't to come with you! I was worried sick! How could you!..."

She was cut through her rant.



“Myama, he didn’t do anything, I followed them.” Delia’s voice was still shaky from her fright...

Ysela looked carefully at the young girl. Meanwhile, Doryan had been wisely standing behind his wife, knowing better than interfering with her dealing with their children.

“You didn’t follow them on foot, did you?” Her voice was strained. She was apparently stopping herself from yelling at Delia, but that didn’t mean that the little girl wasn’t going to meet with her mother’s temper later.

“N-No, I-I took Garyn... I took a short cut to reach the path Teneb usually takes when hunting... Their horses were faster than my pony so I was having trouble catching up with them... Then Garyn got really nervous he even refused to continue. He reared and I screamed and fell. He-he was about to gallop back to the house when he was hit. He was b-blasted a few meters away and laid down, not moving... And then it charged again, at ...m-me.”

“What?”

“T-the h-hog...”

At this, Doryan and Ysela paled dramatically. They knew how dangerous a hog could be when feeling threatened.

“What hog?”

Teneb answered his father this time.

“This one,” he pointed to the carcass still floating behind them, as none of them had dismounted yet.

Ysela raised her hand to her mouth, upon seeing the massive beast. Doryan eyed it carefully.

“An alpha male, quite old... alone... You were lucky to manage to kill it...”

Ysela, returned her gaze to her daughter.



“Delia? What happened after you fell, sweetheart... Were you hurt?”

“I saw it charge me, I screamed again. It, it seemed to be unsettled by it and I-I manage to roll away but I was blocked by a tree. I couldn't move, it charged again, straight at me...”

Delia's words were cut as she took a shaking breath, still trembling upon recalling these events. She resumed her story, stammering.

“I thought I was dead, it was distracted a bit but kept charging...I-I... I fainted... I don't remember much more... Teneb woke me; the hog was laying on the ground. They were all here.”

Ysela nodded. She raised her arms, motioning for her daughter to come.

Teneb handed her his sister... He knew his mother would talk to her. Hopefully Delia wouldn't disobey again anytime soon. He felt a pang at his heart as he thought about Garyn. He had learned how to ride on that pony as had Delia and it hurt to know that this faithful animal was now dead. He had been a bit old, but was still quite energetic...

He sighed heavily and dismounted Myst, followed by his friends. They started to lead their horses back to their paddock. Dawn, being a mare, was not placed in the same one; sharing a whole field with two stallions would have been tempting Fate.

Doryan followed them and waited as they groomed their horses carefully, looking for any injuries from their cut across the bushes. There were a few scratches but nothing that couldn't be healed in a few seconds.

Finally they walked back to the house. The whole thing had been done in silence, no one uttering a word.

As they stepped in, Doryan motioned for them to follow him. They strode along a few corridors and entered what looked like an office.

Teneb closed the door behind them then went to sit between Harry and Celen.



Doryan looked carefully over them.

“Well, what happened?”

Celen decided to speak up.

“We were hunting when we heard a scream. Harry, once Teneb had located the general direction of the scream, did a spell which led us to the person in danger. He lost us as his horse was the fastest and as Teneb had to wait for me... We took a few minutes to locate his aura.”

Teneb caught up.

“We arrived and saw him down with an injured hog charging at him. We had our bows; we shot, and by some miracle managed to wound the hog greatly. Luckily we had taken steel arrows...”

Doryan nodded at his son and the prince and turned to the human. Harry shifted in his chair.

“Well, as Celen told you, I followed the path and arrived in the clearing. There, I saw Delia being attacked by the hog. I didn’t think twice and used one of the spears I had taken with me. But I’m not that great at throwing. The spear hit it in the shoulder, bringing it to the ground, not killing it. I ran to Delia, forgetting to make sure it was dead. It charged me. By this time, Delia had fainted. I rolled away, pushed her into some bushes and threw a knife at the beast, injuring it again. As he was distracted, I ran towards my horse but missed a hole and fell. The hog was charging again. Teneb and Celen arrived just in time...” He shuddered slightly at the memory.

Doryan nodded again, slowly, his eyes on the young human in front of him.

He had been reluctant about accepting him, despite everything he had learned and said last night, but for his son’s sake he had decided to try. He remembered the fury he had felt upon hearing of his son’s life after befriending the human. He had even seen some of them... When the human had accepted to let him in, he had caught a glimpse of the events preceding the vision. His son and the human had been sitting outside, eating, when a group of Daryns had come and one of



them had kicked in the dust near them, sending some on their food. Laughing, the youths had insulted them repeatedly, going as far as shoving Harry to the ground. With a few final crude words, they had left them and the vision started. If this one was a sample of what their life had been at the Headquarters, then he was going to have some serious talks with the masters who had allowed the situation to degenerate this much. A part of him was holding the wizard responsible for dragging Teneb into this whole mess; after all, if he hadn't been there, nothing would have happened to his son. Humans weren't to be trusted; they were foolish creatures, sneaky traitors, weak minded, cowards... The past had taught them this... But he couldn't truthfully say that those adjectives fitted the youth before him... at least from what he could see.

Anger crept back at this thought; Teneb shouldn't have had to pay for humans... But, well, this human shouldn't have had to pay for his ancestors either, should he? He shook his head confused. This was too confusing... This wasn't right... but he couldn't deny that this Harry had saved his daughter's life... He sighed... What a mess this whole situation was!

"Alright, well, I think you should prepare for today's events. I recommend you to wear a full ceremonial outfit," he said, getting up slowly.

The youths nodded, heading for the door when he stopped them.

"Harry, is it? Could you stay? I have some questions for you..."

Teneb looked at his friend. Harry's face was guarded, devoid of emotion, but he nodded slowly and waited for Teneb and Celen to leave.

Once the door closed again, he looked at Doryan.

"Yes?"

The adult looked him over carefully.

"I'm not sure if I'm really happy about your coming into our world, but at least I have to thank you for saving my daughter's life."



Harry gave the man a brief smile.

“There’s no need, I would have done it whoever the person might have been, with the exception of Voldemort.” Upon saying the name of the wizard, Harry’s face had contorted in hatred for this... being. He no longer deserved the name of a man after all of his crimes.

“Yes, this Dark Lord of yours... I... well I think I should hear more about him, but later, now is not the time,” Doryan was dreading to learn more about this Lord. It couldn’t be what he thought it was... it wasn’t possible, he had been banished... But the ritual... he had been chilled to his bones upon hearing Djaira’s cursed name, then some of the artifacts involved in this thrice cursed ritual...

Harry merely nodded, waiting for the man to ask what was really bothering him.

“Now, you do realize that you’re causing problems with your presence... I don’t know what will come out of this, but you’re forcing me to go over facts I thought were true but that now seem quite wrong... I don’t like it a lot...”

He continued, pacing.

“What I want to know is what you really intent to do? I know you told us of your intentions last night but I want the truth...”

Harry looked carefully at the elf.

“Meaning: will I drag Teneb to my world in my fight?” the black haired wizard paused. “I will do what I have to do to help my people. Innocent are dying in my world, families are killed, tortured, children too... I had to witness everything because of my connection with the Dark Lord... I will do everything I can to bring that monster down. I took an oath last night and I intend to respect it. I won’t harm innocents if I can help it, but I won’t let my world fall because of your race’s prejudices. I do not want Teneb to come with me. Voldemort is preparing for something huge, I can feel it, something dark... really dark, and dangerous too, not only for humans but for every living beings... I do not wish to see my blood brother hurt...”



At the last words, Teneb's father's head snapped up.

"Blood brothers?" he asked, frowning.

Harry nodded.

"Yes, Teneb is the closest thing I have of family, besides my friends, my godfather and to some extent some of my professors back in my world. And I won't let something happen to him." He paused. "Your son saved my life, whether or not he knows it, I owe him a life's debt. I want him to stay safe, and perhaps make your race realizes that time passed, that we're not our ancestors... The world changed."

He looked straight into Teneb's father's eyes.

"You wish to know what I intend to do? I'll leave tonight, hopefully to never come back. I will only return if the circumstances ask for it and if there's no other choices left, following the pledge I swore on. As for Teneb's decision, it will be his decision to make."

Doryan was eyeing him carefully, trying to discern the truth in his words.

Harry spoke again.

"But I won't let someone interfere with my decision, not even your King." This time, his voice was laced with a threat.

"I won't submit to him. Be sure to tell him so and to remind him of the consequences of breaking the non- interference rules of the riders."

Doryan nodded, he could understand this reaction, it was to be expected, given the situation.

"I know that... But, there are some things you most know about our society..."

"Teneb told me of your power's structure."

"Alright, but I would like to give you a head up on the different factions that will probably approach you today. I advise you to stay clear of



them... These four groups are the main power sources in the court; most families have joined one of them. The alliances system is tricky and it's a kind of game most old families have been playing for ages: they join a group, conclude alliance to improve their own influence, and then withdraw to join with another. "

Harry simply nodded.

"Well there are four main groups in the court. Those are unofficial, of course, but are holding some real power. You have the Aldyrs: this faction will probably act quite hostile towards you. It's a group of conservators, quite xenophobic too. Their figurehead is an old court man, a Magis, Keal, member of the Council. Ignore them, their main power resides in old members, this group is slowly losing its influence due to their obsession on keeping the things the way they are: they reject any types of changes to our world. They keep to the Old traditions. A few of them are magically powerful but their narrow-mindedness is excluding them from the magical circles, as those are prone to create... They were a dominating faction for a long time but are slowly losing their power after the departure of a few influential families from their midst."

Harry's face was contorted into disgust upon hearing this. But the young wizard stayed silent, knowing that if he spoke up, it wouldn't be to say nice things.

"The second group is completely opposed to the Aldyrs. The Oyeras are likely to come to you and offer their support... Be careful around them, they might be more open to changes than others but don't fool yourself; what everyone at the court will be looking for is a way to secure your powers to their cause."

The young man snorted at this.

"The Oyeras is a group of quite young elves, at least, young for Elvish standards... They are looking for drastic changes to our way of life: use of technology, democracy, well they are the revolutionary group if you want a simple description. They're quite idealistic in their views... but their spokesperson is charismatic. Be wary of him, Ulthon, an Air Elemental, is cunning and has a way with words..."



Doryan paused a bit.

“The next two groups are the more powerful ones. Those two are in the middle and leaning towards one of the other side. First you have the Belans: they’re more on the conservatory side, and the currently most powerful group. Jesen Tarenhils, their leader, is a member of one of our oldest noble families. The name of the Tarenhils was never tarnished by scandals or treason... He is respected among the elves and the other races and many follow his ideas... The Belans support our actual system but are not completely opposed to some changes if they could improve our world but more importantly if they strengthen their position and power.”

After a quick pause, the Elf looked at the youth in front of him, trying to guess his feelings or reactions with little success. The green eyes were staring straight at him and the face showed concentration.

“Finally the Hylmeans, lead by Toran. This last group leans more on a politic of changes, but not to the point of going over the whole system. They support the monarchy and the way power is separated, but wish for more openness... While they support the traditions, they wish to adapt them to the changes going through the world. They know that we must evolve with the world, that stagnation will only lead us to our end...”

Taking in the fervor with which Doryan described this last group, Harry indulged himself a little smile.

“I take that your family belongs to that group...”

“Most of our relations do, a few have joined the Belans. My family has been part of both of these factions for quite a long time now... But as High Counselor I can’t belong to any of them, at least not officially.”

Harry nodded, it made sense. A man in his position couldn’t be favoring some against others...

“I advise you to be extremely cautious today. You can’t afford to do mistakes...” Doryan started to shuffle through some papers.



Nodding, Harry walked to the door, seeing that the talk was over. As his hand fell on the knob, he heard Doryan speak up.

"If humans of now are anything like you, well, I think it's time for us to try to overcome old grudges... Harry, I told you last night you earned my respect... those were hasty words, not entirely truthful on my part, but now I can say it and mean it. Know that you have my support."

With a slight smile, Harry pushed the door open. Maybe hope was not completely lost on the Elvish race, maybe...

--

Harry went to his room and gathered his things before dressing up, putting on his ceremonial outfit. He rather liked the looks it gave him. Standing in front of his mirror as he tied his hair as usual, growing it had been truly a good idea, and stared at his image. He was nearly sixteen, but looked older, around seventeen. His white strand of hair was enforcing this impression. Teneb had also told him that the Magic on the island had surely sped up his growth, magical and physical. His face had matured and lost some of its boyishness, he was taller too. He thought he didn't look exactly like his father anymore. There was still a lot of James Potter in him, but after meeting his parents several times, he had come to see more of his mother in him, besides her eyes. He had inherited her forehead and mouth, as well as her long fingers. He knew that though he had gained some centimeters, he would never be very tall, his childhood had put a strain on him, added to the fact that his mother hadn't been tall either... Checking his clothes, he smiled at his appearance. Yes, he definitely liked it...

The black pants were fitting and he had come to like this color. He flicked his toes in his boots. It had taken some convincing on Teneb's part to have him try them. But once he had done so he had immediately fallen in love with them. They were tailor made. Terio had seen to this as he had been the one to order them, they closed round his feet and leg tightly but not too much, allowing him some flexibility but protecting him nonetheless. The tunic he wore was impressive; he had to give it to the masters, they knew how to gain visual effect. The blood red color had unsettled him at first but he had



come to appreciate its effect on bystanders: Red was for danger, fire, blood, war... some people would have said for love too, but love didn't have his place here. Harry had enhanced the flames, making them look nearly alive... Teneb had done it too. The long flowing sleeves were great for hiding things. He could see the whole outfit had been designed for fighting. The tunic, though long was ample enough and slit in the appropriate places to give a complete freedom of movements. The magical zip prevented buttons from getting caught in something... but there was one thing he despised, it was the high collar. If he found the idiot who had thought of this one, he would make him endure a lifetime of high collar torture. Harry absently tugged at said collar... Checking once more that he had everything rightly placed, down to his weapons, he cast a last glance at his mirror. He was different; there was no denying it... He wondered how his friends would react... They must have changed to....

He sighed, taking his bag as he went out of the room. Well he would see for himself soon enough.

He quickly walked outside where he was met by Teneb and Celen, ready to leave. The two youths had brought Shadow and Lucky was sleeping in his bag. The small fox had stayed out for the night... Harry had let him wander but had put him back in his room before leaving for the hunt; since then, the little animal had been sleeping.

He smiled the fox was a funny thing and quite a handful but Harry didn't regret saving him...

Teneb was wearing the same clothes, the differences being in his choice of weapons. Celen was dressed with white pants, black boots too. He was wearing a white laced up shirt under his ceremonial robes. Harry could see the heir didn't like his outfit at all. But he had to say that the robe looked uncomfortable. It was falling to his ankles, opened on the front from his waist to his feet. The upper part was closed by a line of bronze chiseled buttons. The sleeves were long flowing things, slit on a few centimeters near the hem. They were made of a thick velvet-looking material in a deep blue color, save for the hems which were done in a bronze color. The collar was lined up by some fur which must be itching as hell. The whole robe



sparkled in the light, but looked stuffy. Celen was wearing a long bronze chain with a large medallion on it. In the center of the medallion was encased a big amber stone with something embedded in it.

“Let’s go,” said Teneb, mounting Myst.

Nodding, Harry tied his bag to his saddle. Shadow had his ceremonial tack and bridle on. Shrugging, Harry finished the last knots and after checking them, climbed onto his mount. Doryan was the last to mount. He was riding a red temperamental gelding which seemed determined on digging a hole under him as he kept pawing the ground.

Looking up, Doryan nodded and directed his horse towards the exit. Celen placed himself on his right, Teneb and Harry settling behind.

Celen recalled the talk he had just had with his childhood friend while the human was talking with the High Counselor.

They had gone to their separate rooms and as he was dressed quickly, Celen had gone to his friend’s. As he entered, he had been shocked to see Teneb was barely dressed. The elf had taken his shirt off as well as his pants and was dressed only in his boxers. He was rummaging through his cupboard, looking for his ceremonial outfit.

Celen shuddered as he recalled the still red lines behind his friend’s knees, ankles and on his elbows. There were some scars too...

Flashback

“Teneb, are you?...” Celen stopped upon seeing his friend. It wasn’t that he was nearly naked, he had already seen Teneb in his boxers! He had known him since they were children! But what were those lines!

“Teneb?...” this time his voice was unsure.

His friend turned to look at him and immediately noticed Celen’s gaze fixed on his scars. He sighed, even if Gae had healed his tendons,



the scarring on the skin was best done naturally. The skin would be stronger than if he did it with his powers.

“Yes?” he said, looking straightly at his friend.

“Teneb, what happened? You were hurt?”

Wincing slightly as he recalled those wounds, he motioned for Celen to enter. With a push of his elemental power, he closed the door.

“You’d better sit as I dress up,” he said simply.

“Teneb,” this time Celen was more confident. “How did you get those?”

Blue eyes bore down into Celen’s hazel ones.

“I want your oath that nothing that will be said in this room will leave it.”

“Teneb, I...”

“Your oath, Celen, I’m not doing this for me or for Harry, but because this involves a lot of people.”

Looking intensively at Teneb, the prince nodded slowly.

“I, Celen, heir of Horevald, son of Valera and Enrys, Queen and King of Horevald, swear to Teneb, son of Ylesa and Doryan, High Counselor, to remain silent about what is about to be revealed to me. On my life and magic, I’ll submit to the terms of this oath. May the powers above witness this oath and should it be broken, punish me accordingly. So stated, so decreed.” A tingling wave of power washed through him as he said the last words. This one was not one of the major oaths but the consequences for breaking it wouldn’t be pretty at all.

Teneb nodded in satisfaction as he started to dress.

“Thank you Celen, now about these scars...”



He then told his life-long friend the events that had followed the name choosing ceremony, leaving a few things out, like how he and Harry had managed to pull through it, he mentioned the help of his guardian but didn't say much else. He trusted Celen, and would do so with his life, but the less the prince knew, the less he could reveal by a slip of tongue.

He told them of the Daryns' attack on Harry and him at the end of the ceremony, of their wounds...

"We managed to recover enough to go to the Bonding Ceremony... Thankfully, Gae, my dragon was able to heal both of our wounds if she hadn't we would have been crippled for life."

Teneb dismissed the shock on his friend's face. But he was a bit worried at the fury which started spreading on Celen's features.

"How could they?!... They will..."

"Celen, do not do anything rash..."

"But..." Celen was stammering with shock. "How can you say that after what they did to you?!"

"They were punished by being rejected, and a few things are still waiting for them," he said, as he buckled his belt. "Leave their punishment to Harry and me... Moreover, I know that the Dragons are going to punish them too."

This last sentence seemed to calm the other boy. Seeing this, Teneb asked a question which had been worrying him.

"Now, what do you think of Harry? Be honest."

Celen looked at his hands, not knowing exactly what to say.

"I don't know what to make of him... He seems Ok, but he's a human... I don't know."

Teneb looked attentively to his childhood companion.



"I don't say you have to like him... but you can trust him. I can say that you earned some respect from him. But let me warn you: don't betray him. If you do, I won't be able to help you."

Nodding Celen stored this information.

"Is he dangerous?"

Teneb gave him a sharp look.

"If he was, there would be quite a few dead people already..."

"Why?"

"Let's just say that the riders' attitude could have warranted them a direr punishment than the one they'll receive."

With a few words, he retold some of the things Harry had to endure.

Teneb didn't wait for Celen's reaction; he had been securing different weapons on himself while talking and was now finished.

"We should go fetch the horses, this way we'll leave as soon as Father and Harry are ready."

Nodding slowly, Celen followed him.

"Celen?"

Teneb's voice was unsure.

"Harry's mask is hard to pierce, but if you earn his trust, it'll be for good should you do nothing to lose it... He isn't... like this once you get to see the real him, not the fighter, the one he could have been if he had not come here..."

With that, the elf left, Celen following, deep in thought. His friend had given him a lot to think about. Teneb had changed, he was no longer the cheerful, trusting teenager that helped him steal old Gojyk's wig. This Teneb was more reserved, cautious... but in the end he was still Teneb. Celen had always known that when he would step on the throne, he would have Teneb at his side. Today, he wasn't regretting



the day he had chosen to befriend him. Teneb would be his High Counselor, the one he would trust, the one which would beat some sense in him, should he behave like a fool. The current situation only confirmed his decision, his friend had been able to stand up to his superiors and defend his beliefs. Celen didn't care about what the others would say, Teneb would be his counselor, prejudices be damn! He was his friend and nothing, not even a human would change that!

End of the Flashback

Celen frowned as he recalled his rage at hearing of the attack which had given his friend his scars. He knew that if the human being had been the only one hurt, he wouldn't have been that angry,... a bit shocked, but nothing more. But this wasn't the case, they had hurt his friend... There might not be any lingering injuries, but it didn't change the fact that ... Celen shuddered at the thought of losing most of his physical abilities... And that elves had stooped that low, that they had deliberately injured someone... Then how did that make them superior to humans?

The young prince was startled at this thought. Where did it come from? Sure elves were better than humans, everybody knew this... But... If elves could lower themselves to such a level of cruelty, were they really that better?

He played with this thought, disturbed by these revelations. He didn't like it a lot. They confused him greatly, making him questioning facts he had always taken for granted. His thoughts drifted to this Harry. He was... alright, at least for now. He had proven to be powerful, that one was a given from the past displays... Loyal to his family and Celen couldn't fault him for that. Courageous too... But he was so cold, so closed... Celen didn't know what to make of him. The moment he placed him in a category, Harry did something which forced him to reconsider everything...

He sighed.

Doryan glanced at him.

"Are you alright Celen?"



Out of the public eyes, Doryan treated him more casually, like any friend of his son, not like the heir of Horevald.

"I'm fine, just... confused," he ended lamely.

Despite his earlier resolution, he had still a hard time reconciling with the idea of the power the human held.

"I know, I too am. But I trust my son's judgment."

"As do I," nodded the elf.

Celen looked at his father's counselor.

"What is going to happen?"

"I don't know, but I have a feeling that today will be the beginning of something, I don't know what, but something will happen."

Celen had been feeling something coming, but couldn't decide if it was good or not... His thoughts were still a mess, but he was trying to order them a bit...

"What must I do? My father..."

"Your father should know better than trying to interfere with the riders' policy. As for what you should be doing... Well, it seems quite outdated, but follow your heart, it will never betray you."

They spent the remaining part of the ride in silence.

They arrived among the first at the castle. Leaving their horses at the stable, they walked in, Doryan guiding them to the throne room.

Harry couldn't help but notice the stares he was getting, something which was starting to get seriously on his nerves.

*Calm down Harry, Ignore them...*

Teneb's voice was soothing.



*It's getting old... By the way, I think I could come to respect your father, he was quite honest with me...*

*I'm happy to know this...*

*Your mother is nice and your sister... Well I wish I could have siblings...*

Teneb perceived the yearning laced in the mental voice of his blood brother.

*And what about Celen?*

*He seems alright, I'll wait and see, but for now I have nothing against him...*

They stopped talking as they entered the room.

There weren't a lot of people present.

The royal couple was standing on the stage plus someone else. As Harry approached them, he raised an eyebrow. A young girl, about sixteen was standing near the King, looking subdued.

"Who is she?"

Teneb sent him a warning glance.

"Be careful with her, it's Najira..."

"The bastard daughter."

"Yes, she's part Veela and her powers are strong, enhanced by her Elvish parentage. She doesn't have them completely under control. Be wary of her... The King uses her to draw people to his side quite often."

Harry barely restrained himself from snorting. The thought of him falling for such an obvious trap was ridiculous. But seeing Teneb's serious face, he nodded.



As he came closer he distinctively recognized the Veela features. Fleur had been a part-Veela too. Najira was quite tall, slender, with a figure a girl would die for. She had long, rich, slightly wavy golden-blonde hair that fell down to the middle of her back, framing a heart-shaped face. Cherry-red full lips, perfect creamy unblemished skin, huge deep blue eyes, with a violet tint to them, thick eye-lashes, delicately arched eyebrows. She was wearing a pale violet dress which was flattering her, enhancing her slim waist and her complexion. The cut of the robes had been apparently studied to bring to attention her curves and her face. The simplicity of the dress only served to make her beauty all the more remarkable. Harry had to give it to the King, he was presenting him a perfect bait, but he knew better than to fall for something that obvious!

He reinforced his mental shields. His mental abilities weren't exceptionally strong but he had built shields around his mind he knew that even a very skilled Telepathic Master would have trouble breaking. It had been a matter of preservation, added to the fact he had a natural resilience to mental invasion as his throwing off the Imperious in fourth year had showed. Arxeren had helped him develop them to their fullest. Reassured to see that they were firmly in place, he focused on the couple that stood beside Najira. The King was eyeing him, while talking to his daughter. The girl didn't seem to like what she was told; the elf had his hand on her shoulder and was holding it in an very tight grip. Harry could nearly see a flicker of fear in the girl eyes as she looked at him, then at her father before nodding.

What was going on?

He shrugged mentally, reporting his attention on the King.

Bastard.

That was all he could think of him. There was no way he was going to submit to this power hungry bastard.

Language, Harry, Language!

Good morning Arxeren... How are you?



As fine as possible, given the situation...

That bad?

Very funny... Now if you could spare me a few seconds, I came to warn you that the Council decided what punishment should be given to the riders. The whole council will come to announce it after you go to the temple.

Good... Arxeren, why everybody is warning me against Najira?...

You've met her? Be careful!

I'm about to meet her. But why?

Her Veela's powers are magnified by the Elvish mental abilities. She had some control over them, but most of it is raw power. The King has her completely under his control. Be careful not to fall for her powers...

Alright...

So, interested in girls now? Why, you have grown! Arxeren's voice was trembling, with a slightly derisive edge. We're going to have a talk, The Talk...

Harry felt himself color a bit.

Er... Thank you Arxeren, but I don't think we have the time... We're almost here... Bye!

He sensed his guardian's amusement upon his hasty retreat, but he wasn't going to have him talk about this! He tried to suppress the slight blush that had crept on his cheeks at this thought.

Shaking his head he replaced his attention on the situation at hand. Next to the King, was his wife. She seemed alright and he noticed she was staring straight at him. Harry could see where Celen had gotten his looks. Both elves had the same hazel, almond-shaped eyes and face's structure. Celen had inherited his father's jaw line



and dark blond hair. On the far side on the stage, he spotted Demenor. The elf seemed like he had not slept through the night.

Finally they arrived at the stage. Doryan bowed to the King and Celen saluted his parents. Teneb and Harry waited, standing stiffly behind.

The King smiled and gave a sharp sign of the head to his daughter who sighed and walked to his side, looking uncomfortable.

“Good morning, may I present you Najira? She will be your guide for the day, Athar Harry. Feel free to ask whatever you want from her...”

Najira seemed quite unhappy at this, but plastered a smile on her beautiful face. With a few graceful steps, she was at Harry’s side and bowed to him.

At these words, Harry had visibly stiffened; he looked at King Enrys and spoke.

“While I’m grateful,” the last word was loaded with sarcasm, “it isn’t necessary; Teneb, I’m sure, will tell me all I have to know...”

The King merely smiled.

“Consider it as a compensation for our earlier behavior.”

Forced to accept, Harry nodded.

A feral grin passed on Enrys’ lips.

“Good, Najira, I trust you to treat our host with the respect he deserves.” The threat was obvious in his words.

“Yes, Your Majesty,” her voice was soft, with a musical edge.

“Well, I think we should be going,” he clapped his hands.

It was then that Harry noticed that the room had filled a bit and that the other new riders had entered, with their family. Even those rejected where there and from the look the people surrounding them gave him and Teneb, they had fed their relatives a much altered



version of the truth. Several other people were filling the room, surely some court men.

Harry followed his friend out, Najira at his side. Their horses were waiting for them in the courtyard, before the castle.

With a swift jump, Harry was seated and waited for the others.

A stable hand was coming, followed by a soft looking brown gelding. Najira quickly climbed on it, seating herself side-saddle.

Harry couldn't deny she was exceptionally pretty as he looked at her. He was a nearly sixteen-year-old teenager, he could recognize a pretty face when he saw one, but there was something off going on there. He dismissed the thought carelessly.

Leaning on his stallion he pat the soft fur on the neck lovingly.

The bag was still fixed on his saddle and Lucky was still sleeping.

Seeing the little devil seemed to have barely rested during the night, it was understandable. The King approached Doryan and talked with him for a bit. The Counselor looked a bit surprised but nodded, before turning to his son.

*Harry?*

*Yes?*

*I'm sorry but I'll have to walk with the King and Celen and my father. King Enrys want to talk to me... How surprising! It will leave me alone with his daughter, but that's circumstantial...*

*If you want, I can...*

*No, go ahead, I'll be careful with her.*

*Ok, but you're sure?*

*Yes, how long does it take to reach the temple.*



*Well, if we were alone it would take us fifteen minutes to gallop there. But as we're going to walk, forty-five minutes at least.*

*Joy!*

*You're sure you don't want me to...*

*No, go with the King or it'll make him suspicious...*

*Alright.*

They silenced as the procession started its ride towards the temple. Harry and Najira found themselves placed a few meters behind Teneb. The wizard couldn't hear what was said as a strong wind had started and was covering their voices. He thought of his friend and of Voldemort, trying to plan what he would do. See his friends, that was a given, Sirius and Remus too, Hagrid, Professor Dumbledore to give them all the information he had. Then he would go to see Dobby and eat! The food here wasn't bad but it couldn't compare to Hogwarts' food.

He was so lost in his thought that he nearly fell off his horse, startled when a hand touched his forearm delicately. Head snapping up, he looked straight into the half-Veela's eyes and immediately felt something strong hitting his shields.

He snarled.

"Don't even try this, my lady. It wouldn't be a wise thing to do," he said, icily.

The younger girl faltered under his gaze and even seemed... scared?

"I'm sorry, please pardon me...I didn't mean to do it," her voice was soft but he could hear the slightly panicked edge in her tone.

"For someone who didn't mean to do so, it was quite a powerful compulsion," Harry shot back, sarcastically.

"I-I..."



“If I were you, I would stop right now...”

“I-I can’t... He will be so angry...” her last words were whispered and barely audible. She gasped, realizing her slip of tongue.

This perked up Harry’s attention.

“Who?”

“Nobody!” This time she was definitively scared.

“It’s your father, isn’t it?” Harry’s voice had softened a little.

She remained silent, her head bowed.

“What did he ask you?”

“Nothing...” she replied dully.

Harry raised an eyebrow at the young girl.

“You expect me to believe it?”

She looked at him, her eyes blazing.

“I don’t care what you think! It’s your fault I’m in this situation! Being a half-blood is difficult enough!”

Harry remained silent.

“You can’t understand what it is! But if you must know I’m supposed to seduce you and make you fall under my control with my powers! But apparently my dear father omitted to tell me you had the strongest mental barriers I’ve ever seen...”

Smirking, Harry looked at her.

“See, it wasn’t that difficult. But really, I might be a human, but I can see a trap when I meet one.”

Najira sighed.



“Well, with luck, he won’t punish me too harshly for my failure...”

“Punish you?”

“I was supposed to woo you, but I don’t see how I can do it with your shields, so I’ll be punished.”

“I was told you had little control over your powers; it doesn’t seem so.”

“Oh! This, it’s just a rumor father had running, to have people not so wary of me...”

Harry frowned, she was hiding something that much was obvious, but unless he dropped his shields enough to read her, he couldn’t be sure. And lowering his shields was the last thing on his mind! She might be truthful, but he wasn’t taking any chance.

“What will you do then?” he finally asked, cautious. She didn’t seem that bad, he might have been too hasty to judge her. It wasn’t because she was the King’s daughter that she was like him. Moreover she was a half-blood.

“Well, I don’t have much choice, I must stay with you for the day, I hope you don’t mind.”

Harry shrugged.

“No, as long as you don’t try to use your power on me... You could describe the landscape...”

Nodding, Najira started to give him explanations on the different buildings they passed or sometimes on a type of tree or flower.

Harry nodded from time to time, half of his mind listening, the other pondering on the situation.

Apparently, Najira seemed to be innocent of her father’s manipulations, but he couldn’t know for sure... Maybe it was just an act. But if she was a victim of this mess, well he could at least make it a bit easier on her. He could go along for now. If she was acting, well,



too bad for her, but if she was just obeying her father, then it would make things a bit better for her.

Finally they arrived at the temple.

Harry starred in awe at the sight.

“Breathtaking, isn’t it?” said Najira, smiling. “Lunai’s temple is on the right, Solyen’s on the left and in the middle you can see the Powers’ temple.”

He merely nodded.

The building was shaped as an arch and divided in three part. On both side, you had a high rectangular building. The roof was triangular-shaped covered with a particular stone, lithium, which shone in the sun, giving it a kind of ethereal glow.

The front of those two buildings was supported by several columns. Little leaves were sculpted, running around them from their base to their tops which looked a lot like the ones found in Greek temples, delicately chiseled. Scenes were carved in the stone top on the front, supported by the first line of columns. There were a lot of trees and flowers blooming around, showing off their colors. Between the two buildings, finishing the arch, stood a third one. A few steps brought you to two columns framing a huge bronze door. The roof was again made of ilthium, but was shaped as a cupola. Harry could see a small hole at the top. Glassy looking structure ran up the cupola, intertwining, interlacing. Several sculptures were placed around. What type, Harry couldn’t guess, but he could see them from where he was.

It hadn’t been the buildings that had made him gasp. Sure it was stunning, but what had overwhelmed him was the amount of Magic circulating between the buildings. It was incredible; the atmosphere itself seemed to be soaked with power.

He nodded at Najira, too distracted by this to care about what she was saying.



They walked in the area delimited by the three buildings. The King motioned for everyone to dismount. Slowly, Harry climbed off his horse, still trying to adapt to the amount of magic here. He had to be careful here, so much power... He didn't want to burn himself. He tuned down his magical sensibility as the power around him were starting to give him a headache. The decreasing of the pressure on his magical senses was a relief.

Two men and two women who Harry recognized immediately for Doijas and Deisers were waiting for them on the steps leading to the central building.

They bowed at the King and looked at them all, their eyes lingering a bit longer on Harry but their faces remaining expressionless.

"Welcome to Kahera, May the Powers above protect you," said one of the women. "The Xhan and the Xhana are awaiting you. However you have to purify yourself before entering the temple and no weapons will be allowed in this sanctuary. Those who don't want to follow this rule will have to remain outside."

Whispers followed this declaration.

"Will those consenting to submit to this rule follow us?" said a man, motioning to the other woman and himself. They headed for a small chapel on their right, between Solyen's temple and the Powers' sanctuary.

"Will the new riders follow us to prepare for the ceremony?" said the remaining woman.

Harry approached her with Teneb. Najira had left with most of those who had come and those who had arrived earlier and had been waiting for them. Stable hands were taking care of the horses. Suddenly a neigh broke the silence. Harry whirled on his heel and saw Shadow rearing as a boy was trying to lead him outside.

Sighing, the wizard hurried to his stallion as he reared again, his front leg boxing the air before him.

"Acta!" he snapped.



Immediately, the stallion calmed down. Harry approached him and caressed his forehead, scratching him at the base of his mane, knowing the black horse liked that a lot. The huge animal pressed his head onto his chest, bringing a small smile to Harry's lips.

He saw a ginger head point out of the bag, blinking its eyes, trying to see what all the commotion was about. With a yawn, showing off his sharp little teeth, the fox returned to the bag, probably to sleep.

Harry turned to the stable hand who was trembling behind him.

"Come, he's calm now."

Slowly the boy stepped closer.

"Give me your hand."

Shakily, he obeyed and Harry took his wrist, presenting it to his mount who sniffed it suspiciously.

"Ida."

With a snort, the stallion shook his head, before scratching his leg. Satisfied, knowing that Shadow would allow the boy to approach and groom him, he turned to said boy who looked like he was about to wet himself.

"Relax, I won't harm you. You can take him, but don't let others come too close or I don't guaranty anything. He'll let you take care of him. Just be careful, I've a little fox sleeping in my bag, if he goes out, let him, just don't harm him."

The boy nodded sharply.

Harry handed him the reins and, with a last pat at Shadow, left, seeing that the stallion was now following the boy without protesting.

Usually, he ordered him to stay calm when he had to leave him with other people but he had forgotten today and well, this boy would be the only one to be able to approach him.



He walked back to the others who were waiting for him and nodded sharply at them.

With a smile, the two adults led them inside the main building. They immediately turned on their right and entered a small room. The Doija spoke up.

“You’ll leave your clothes and weapons in this room. It will be locked so don’t worry about anyone stealing it.”

Nodding, Harry, as all the other present took off his ceremonial clothes, carefully folding them. Carefully he un-strapped his blades, placing them next to his clothes. The only things he kept were his Athar earring, his necklace, the ring he had got at the name’s ceremony and of course his boxers.

He looked around and saw that all the others were in their underwear too. They were seven of them: three girls and four boys. Absently he checked the scars on his wrist. It was healing nicely, in two weeks there would be only a faint white line left.

“What happened to you?!”

He whirled and saw the others gawking at him and Teneb, more precisely at their knees. The scars there were an angry red as they were tugging at the scarring tissue each time they worked or rode.

He raised an eyebrow and turned to check his sword, not willing to talk about it.

Teneb eyed them before answering.

“Ask Garth and his friend, they’ll know since they were the ones to give them to us.” With that Teneb walked to Harry. He could hear the five others talking and felt their stares.

“Alright Harry?”

“Yes, you?”

“Fine, for now...”



They fell into a comfortable silence, broken as the Doija and Deiser entered again.

They looked at them and smiled.

“I won, Elga,” said the man, cheerfully, eyeing them with an amused look.

“Tyldan...” She turned to the seven youths, “you have to take all of your clothes, but you can keep your necklaces, earrings and rings.” She ignored the protestations and looked at them with a calm gaze.

Harry’s cheek was burning with embarrassment, he had to be naked!! No way! This wasn’t said anywhere.

*Teneb, tell me you didn’t know about it, or I’ll skin you alive!*

*Believe me, had I known, I would have told you.*

*Arxeren...*

Yes?

The guardian seemed to be amused.

*You didn’t know about this particular ritual, I hope...*

What, the naked part? Of course I knew about it!

*Then why didn’t you warn me!!*

And miss this? You’re joking!

Harry heard his guardian gleeful laugh and cut their talk, frustrated at the spirit.

Elga eyed them Tyldan clearly enjoying the situation at her side.

The Doija held her hand up.

“If you want to be able to use your status’ powers, you have to go through this and submit to these rules, those who don’t want to can



leave, but those who desire to participate to the ceremony have to take off their clothes, and if you refuse, I'll gladly give you some encouragement." She raised her hand, the threat audible in her voice.

Starring at her, the youths seemed to realize that if they wanted to go in the next room, they would have to do so without their clothes... and they hadn't come this far to chicken out at the end.

Burning with embarrassment, he took off his boxers, quickly placing them with his clothes and then starring at a wall, looking anywhere but at the others.

Shaking their heads, the two adults led them to the next room, there was a pool filled with a transparent liquid.

"You'll have to be purified, both physically and magically; just cross this room, we'll be waiting for you on the other side." With that, they left again.

Looking at Teneb's face, Harry shrugged, he was still blushing, and he saw that Teneb was too. Together, they stepped into the pool, walking down the steps until they reached the bottom. The water was reaching their shoulders. Slowly they reached the opposite side and climbed up the steps. From the sounds behind them, the others had followed their lead. They headed for the back of the room when Harry stopped, feeling a tingle wash through him. He let whatever this thing was, look over him. It reached his magical core, washed through it, lingering on some part. It then tugged on his shields and with a sigh, knowing that he wouldn't be able to leave before he did so, Harry dropped his barriers, letting the thing in his mind. It wasn't threatening or he would have resisted, it just seemed... curious, for a lack of a better word, a bit like the Pagats...

Finally the thing seemed happy with its examination and left. Harry resumed his walk. He finally arrived at the back of the room where Elga and Tyldan were waiting.

He felt his blush came back full force as he felt their gaze on him.

Once they were all here, they went in a third room. There, veiled people were waiting for them, and Harry felt the blush worsen...



“They will now dress you,” said Elga, clearly amused at their embarrassment.

The veiled people, Harry couldn't see if they were women or men, came to them and dragged each of them to a part of the room. Standing stiffly, Harry closed his eyes, too embarrassed. He felt them tie something around his hips, untie his hair and tying a part. Finally he sensed them placing something around his neck which laid on his chest.

Opening his eyes, seeing as they seemed to be done, he noticed that he was now wearing a white loin cloth, a torque was resting on his chest. It was made of silver with an amber stone embedded in it. Raising a hand in his hair he felt that they had let it loose but had braided a strand on his right side with a golden thread. He was still barefoot. Looking up, he saw that all the boys were dressed like him, the only difference being that except for Teneb the thread in their hair was red. The girls were wearing a long toga which reached their ankles, their hair also loose with a small braid. All of them were wearing the torque.

Elga and Tyldan came back as the veiled people left in silence. Not a word had been exchanged during the whole thing and it was unnerving Harry.

“Good... Now, follow us, the ceremony is about to begin.... One last thing, you're bound to stay silent during the whole ritual, only speak if asked to.”

Nodding, they left...

After many a turn, they entered a huge room. Harry secured immediately his shields and let his cool mask fall on his features. From the corner of his eye, he saw Elga and Tyldan do a double take at him, looking at bit confused.

Seeing that they weren't any immediate threat he hadn't raised his shields back instantly, but now, in a room full of people not so well disposed toward him... That was another story. Moreover Najira's presence only made him twice more careful. Blinking a few time to adjust to the light in the room, he let his eyes wander around. The



room was really huge; rows of seats were standing before them. The room was full, that much was obvious, he could even make out people standing in the back.

He and the others were standing on a stage, bathed in a warm light. An altar was standing in the middle near a stone basin, filled with a swirling crystal liquid. On the wall, tapestries were hung, retracing the myth of Lunai and Solyen. Two people were standing near the altar. Harry blinked a few times: to check if he was dreaming. He raised his hand to check if he still had his glasses on, only to let his arm fall back, he had had his vision corrected when he had arrived at the Headquarters. Arxeren had explained that when arriving at the Headquarters, the defaults that might hinder your progresses were corrected. In his case, his glasses would have been dangerous as that should they fall, he would be defenseless.

The two people approached and he felt his throat tightened, he had recognized the Xhan and Xhana but at this moment they weren't Luan or Cya anymore, they were Lunai and Solyen.

He bowed deeply before them. It was the deepest mark of respect he had showed so far and it didn't get past those watching closely.

Apparently Teneb and Kobalt had caught up too, as they bowed as well.

The two figures slid to the altar.

"Today you are gathered before us to witness the induction of these youths."

The priestess embodying Lunai had a rich voice with a velvet edge.

"Now, open your souls and await our decision."

The seven youths approached them and knelt before them, bowing their head, waiting.

"I am Lunai, mother of all. Life follows my circle. I am the Night, the Darkness hidden in your depths. I listen to your fears, your desires,



your dreams, your dark secrets. Child, Lover, Mother, Old, all these faces are mine.”

A flow of power was surrounding the priestess as she spoke, her words slamming into your skull. Harry shivered he could sense the power she was now channeling and it was frightening.

“Do you swear your allegiance to Lunai, in all her forms, submit to her circle and accept your mortality?”

Together in one united voice, the Daryns answered:

“I do.”

The man stepped forwards, stopping at the woman’s side.

“I am Solyen. I give life, I kill. I am your friend, the joy in your heart, but also your foe, who dry you to your bone. I am the Light, the ideals you follow, Ruler of your life, imposing you my law. Lover or Murderer those are my names.”

Harry felt suddenly very hot; he could feel a burning on his neck but didn’t move. He was scared and was not ashamed to admit it. These two people were the channel of a Power far superior of anything he had ever seen. The depths of this ceremony were clear to him. It was designed to guaranty the morals of the riders. They hold a lot of power and the rising of a Dark rider couldn’t be afforded.

“Do you submit to my powers, do you swear to follow my rule, to respect the life I give but to strike if needed?” Again the answer seemed to come from deep within himself.

“I do.”

The two figures joined hands, and started to chant together.

“We are the Powers above, the life in every being, we are the balance in every world, we are the justice, the peace, the truth.”



They turned to them again and this time Harry was chilled to the bone by the amount of power. How could they still be alive? How could they not burn under this strain?

“Do you swear to respect our laws, to seek the truth, the justice? Do you swear to serve the balance?”

“I do.”

“Then stand up, Dragonriders. Face our judgment.”

The seven new riders obeyed, but kept their heads bowed.

“Will one of you ride the Azurean, strong, and temperamental? Will one of you harness his strength for greater Good?”

“I will,” said Malisa, stepping forwards, her eyes were glazed; she seemed to be seeing something reserved to her.

“Then step forwards.”

Harry saw the girl took a few steps towards the altar, heard some muffled cries, gasps from the audience but couldn't decipher what was being done. After a few second the priest spoke up.

“Will one of you ride the Dawnris, helper of those in need, giving hope in time of darkness, will one of you help him in his quest?”

“I will.” Arnelle had a determined glint in her eyes, and her face had lost her usual arrogance. She seemed nearly humble.

Like Malisa, she walked to the Altar.

“Will one of you ride the Dusker, fighter of the Shadow, Healer of the mind? Will one of you make the shadows his?”

This time it was Opheria who answered the call. The young Magis was calm and sure of herself as she stepped towards the two figures.

“Will one of you ride the Firelans, ruler of fire, fighter, strong headed and hot tempered? Will one of you make the power of fire his?”



As silence answered them, they resumed their chant.

“Will one of you ride the Dewat, ruler of water, calm and implacable, strong in its determination? Will one of you harness the power of water?

Kobalt stepped forwards this time. The elemental’s hair was nearly glowing in the light, his eyes an unnatural shade of blue, which seemed to pierce you, but his face was set and determined.

“Will one of you ride the Wiscand, the immaterial, the omniscient, the volatile? Will one of you tame the power of air?

Silence answered the priestess who had been the one to speak. She resumed her speech.

“Will one of you ride the Quear, Life’s support, level headed, but implacable and true to his decision, Will one of you bear his powers?”

Inir walked shakily to the altar, after having answered.

“Will one of you ride the Emnag, the Light keeper, compassionate, truthful, and tolerant? Will one of you share her burden and powers to Heal?”

“I will,” Teneb’s voice was strong and Harry smiled at his blood brother. He nearly looked up as gasps erupted in the room a few seconds later.

“Who will ride the Sowaroc, the Child of Power, fair to all, powerful, leader of his race? Who will share his burden and help him preserve the balance?”

Raising his gaze, Harry spoke, his voice echoing through him.

“I will.”

“Then step forwards.”



He walked to the altar and stopped before them, his gaze locked on theirs. The priestess extended her hand, asking for his own, the priest doing the same.

Wordlessly, he gave her his right hand and his left to the man.

Together, they raised two twin ritual daggers, their blades shining, their obsidian handle shaped as a moon crescent or a sun.

Harry, repressed the initial flicker of panic of seeing two seemingly possessed people drawing blades up to him. Forcing himself to relax, he didn't let his gaze waver from theirs.

Placing his hands above the altar they turned them towards the ceiling, and Harry felt their grip tightened as they saw the blood brother marks, the crescent scars he would always bear from his suicide attempt. He could have got rid of them, but had wanted to keep them as a reminder. The red lines from Garth's attack were standing out vividly on his skin as well. He was grateful that the loin clothes was long enough hide his knees and that the light wasn't strong enough to show those on his ankles. Wordlessly, they lowered the dagger and made two light cuts in his palms, one shaped as the rune standing for Lunai and one the other, the rune for Solyen. Harry stood still. They hadn't cut deep enough to do any damage. They turned the palms towards the altar and let two drops of his blood fall on it.

Glancing down briefly, Harry noticed that the altar was nearly completely covered with brown dots, in truth it was nearly completely brown.

Then they guided him to the basin and placed his hands in the liquid. Harry closed his eyes and bit down a cry as the liquid hit his palms. It hurt! He felt some of the liquid enter the cut and felt his magic react. He opened his eyes and nearly had a heart attack. He wasn't the only one, if the gasps from the people seated in the room were a clue about their reaction. A beam of light had shot up from the basin and assumed the form of Arxeren. The Sowaroc looked at him and Harry bowed his head at it, feeling that his usual saluting to his guardian wouldn't be appreciated now... a second beam shot out and a



leopard appeared, prowling around. Harry smiled at the picture of his Animagus form.

The two priests took his hands out of the basin and he was relieved to see that the cuts were perfectly healed, only leaving faint scars.

They let go of his wrists and bowing to them one last time, he joined the other riders, standing near his friend.

“You swore to respect our laws; you are now bound by them and the Dragon Laws to the help of those in need. By our powers combined we witness your pledge, should you break your oath, clearly, willingly, and in possession of all your faculties, may your powers taken away and your life cursed.”

“Who among you proved by his abilities to have deserved the title of Athar, who was charged with the responsibilities of upholding these laws for his group and deal with the punishments in our names?”

Teneb and Harry took a step forwards, entering in the light again.

“We were.”

“You were judged worthy by your peers,” at this only the solemn atmosphere prevented Harry from snorting. “Now you will prove your worth to the Dragons,” they pointed to a door on their right. “Face their judgment in the Chamber.”

As they moved towards the door, they stopped as they heard a cry.

“Blasphemy! A human-scum can’t enter the Chamber! He’ll taint...!”

The man was suddenly silenced and Harry and Teneb resumed their walk.

They stepped through door, stepping into the Darkness.

--

Harry felt himself fell, then he felt examined, probed as deeply as possible. Finally he was back on solid ground. He was in a circular



room, surrounded by the statue of the nine Dragons, Teneb at his side. The pressure on him was high.

He bowed, at the same time as Teneb to each statue before falling on both knees, his head down, his mark showing.

He felt a pressure at his shields and once again dropped them.

The presence started to go through his mind, little by little, it brought every memory present in Harry's superficial mind and then started to pry deeper, slowly taking down most of Harry's barriers. By the end, as it reached Harry's deepest thoughts, fear, secrets, desires, Harry was shivering, he had been forced relive every part of his life even some he'd have liked to forget. Nothing escaped from the presence. It started to take down Harry's last barrier, the one protecting his inner being. As the barrier fell, Harry felt himself sense his deeper desires and would have blushed had it been possible as some of them unraveled... But the main one was a family after came the desire for a normal life. His worse fears followed and he watched as some scene which had haunted his sleep for weeks unraveled before him, Hogwarts destroyed, every deaths coming back to accuse him of having abandoned them. His friend accusing him of Cedric's murder and rejecting him or sending him in Azkaban... Finally it was the part Harry dreaded, he knew he should have dealt with the visions, but hadn't found the courage to do so. He had pushed them as far away as possible, to the very end of his mind. He didn't want to go through them again.

*Please! Don't do that.... Please.*

Had the presence been human, Harry would have sworn she would have chuckled. He felt a wave a comfort wash through him as the presence reached for his memories of the visions. He waited with dread for the images of tortures and massacres to come; but this time he didn't had to experience them. The presence wasn't as amused as before, he could feel some anger, even rage, worry, sorrow, sadness and even some dread. He was startled at the last one. What should this presence have to fear from Voldemort?

A sad laugh coursed through his body, followed by a wave of warmth. Harry slowly came back to his senses. He was still in the room;



Teneb was coming back to consciousness next to him. Looking around, he frowned at the statues, she seemed nearly... alive.

Indeed Astyan.

Harry nearly jumped out of his skin, drawing a chuckle from the presence there. Looking widely around, trying to find the source of the voice, he focused back on the statues.

“Sorry?”

“Harry? What’s the problem?”

Nothing, Heldren...

This time they both jumped, startled out of their wits by this voice.

“What’s this?”

Harry shrugged before turning to the statues.

“Excuse me, but are you alive?” He felt quite stupid talking to statues.

Not exactly, Astyan, we are merely using them to communicate with you.

“We?” Harry was confused at this pronoun... He turned to Teneb.

The elf was looking at the statues in awe, on the verge of fainting.

“I think, we’re talking to the Elders,” he whispered faintly.

Good thinking, Heldren. You’re correct in your assumption.

Thump.

Teneb was suddenly lying on the ground, out of cold.

“Great...” Harry knelt near his friend and used an old trick. He closed his mouth and pinched his nose, not sure about using his magic in an environment which was that soaked with power.



It took him a few seconds but Teneb came back to consciousness, from lack of oxygen.

“Ooh... I was dreaming that I was speaking with the Elders and then...” he looked at Harry. “It wasn’t a dream, was it?”

“No it wasn’t, and you’d better stay awake.”

Better, Heldren?

“Yes, thank you.”

“Why are we here?” asked Harry.

As direct as ever Astyan, this never changes apparently. To answer your question, usually we keep at the inspection of your memories, but in your case we had to talk to you.

Both youths stayed silent waiting for the voice to continue.

As Seid said, your case was peculiar; the voice was a little different this time. More feminine decided Harry.

Your presence, Astyan provoked a lot of events which forced us to step in. We usually stay out of the riders’ problems, they mustn’t rely to much on us, but their past attitude forced us to take some measures, measures you’ll find out in a few hours. But above all, you forced us to reconsider a decision we took a long time ago... But well, this is not the matter at hand.

Well, a third voice started, this concerns the Dark Lord of your world. Astyan, it’s imperative that you stop his current plan. If you fail to do so, we’ll have to resort to actions whose consequences will affect a lot of things.

“What is he doing?” asked Harry, confused. “I know he is planning a ritual, but apart from this I don’t know anything.”

Your friends have found out what he is planning and the elves nearly witnessed it a long time ago. Heldren, your father will be able to give you more details, ask him about Luctan. You’ll need the help of this



world, Astyan. Elves, Elementals and Magi are masters in the art of rituals...

"We're doomed then, apart from a few of them, many would rather die than help my people," said Harry, bitterly.

Don't be so sure...

"Rexeran?" Harry had recognized the voice immediately.

Yes, but you should go, you've got a lot to do and Gae and myself will tell you what you need to know later.

"Alright..." agreed Harry.

Teneb looked around as Harry seemed deep in thought.

"Excuse me, but how do we get out of here?"

This time the voice answering was deeply amused.

Don't worry, let yourself fall in a trance and we'll take care of that.

"Thank you Gae."

You're welcome, my bonded. We'll give you your mark on your way back. You can will it to disappear or appear whenever you want as it is quite visible. It will also allow you to join your powers, should the need arise.

The two Athars nodded.

If you do not have any questions for the moment, I think you should leave. Said another voice.

Bowing a last time to the statues, they fell into a deep trance and felt themselves be swept away. During the transfer they were hit by a ball of energy which fixed on their magic. They reappeared behind the door through which they had walked to enter the Chamber.

Harry felt a sting at his temple. He looked at his friend and snorted.



"I understand what they meant by visible..."

"Yes, thankfully we can hide it, I don't think it would have been able to be discreet otherwise..."

The mark was a glowing silver blue on their right temple: quite big, it was made of two intertwined spirals.

"Ready?" said Teneb, his hand on the knob of the door.

"As ready as I can be."

Teneb banged the door open. Taking a deep breath, they stepped back in the main room.

--

The King had been awaiting the end of the ceremony, so that Najira could resume her work on the human. But he had to admit it was quite impressive. The last group of riders had been quite a long time ago, 100 years or something approaching. The room itself was impressive. On his right, Doryan seemed thoughtful. On their way to the temple, his Counselor had advised him not to try to trick the human or try going against him. But the King couldn't let this pass. His authority couldn't be challenged and the stunt the human had pulled earlier wouldn't go unpunished once he would have him secured to his bidding. Demenor had told him the same thing, though in much more direct terms. He glanced at his daughter, she would obey him he was sure, but would she succeed? This wasn't a given... Maybe he should prepare a backup plan... He had known from the beginning that the human wouldn't submit to him, so he had made sure to be overheard in the gardens. He wasn't that stupid. If he hadn't wanted to be heard he would have kept this talk for later, but he had sensed two people coming and had quickly built his plan. If the human distrusted him, he would be all the more likely to sympathize with other people besides him and maybe link strongly to them if he saw the King be rough with them... Strongly enough for him to use it and turn it to his advantage.

Using Celen was a definite no, his wife had made sure to teach the boy a few principles... He had thought about using Teneb, but as he



had been the one with the human in the garden, it had been dismissed too. Using Valera was out of question and Doryan as well as Demenor seemed to have set up their minds against any idea of manipulation of this human. That left Najira and he wasn't that sure she would succeed. Yes he would use his backup plan, better be safe than sorry... The human would be his, he would bind him to him with bonds of flesh and blood, him being an orphan would make the whole thing more effective.

His thoughts were interrupted as the new riders entered.

His eyes rested on the human, he had to admit that he wasn't bad looking, and looking around he could see that this thought was shared by a few young ladies. Glancing at his daughter, he saw her looking at the human with a glazed look in her eyes. All the better, the stronger her Veela urges would be, the stronger her power would be.

Maybe human blood would stabilize the Veela and elf mix... it was a thought he had to work on. Once the human would be his, he would be able to experiment. And maybe with Elementals... seeing he was gifted, maybe he could get a child with control over two elements if the human blood didn't nullify the Elemental blood. Breeding had always been his hobby, and he was trying to find the perfect way to get a child which would gather the powers from the different races. It had to be possible...

He came back to the ceremony. Cya and Luan had disguised themselves as their god and goddess. It had been a long time since the King had stopped believing in this nonsense. But he indulged them as this belief was strongly anchored in people's minds.

They started their ritual, asking their dragon type then marking them and showing their soul-picture. Now, this was interesting. Soul picture could give away quite a lot about someone.

The first ones were a bit disappointing. A butterfly and a cat, really, how useful could it be? The third girl was a wolf, now this was a bit more interesting, he would have to keep a close look on this Ophelia. Kobalt's picture was interesting too: an hydra. Inir's was a bit deceiving, sure horses were great but... He had been surprised at Teneb's: a dragon soul?! And an Emnag at that... He smirked; Celen



had chosen his friend well. He had assured himself the support of someone who promised to be extremely powerful as an adult.

Then came the human. He was eager to see it; it would help his plan to know a bit more about him. The King was stunned as everybody else to see the form of a Sowaroc rise from the liquid, followed by a leopard. It settled it: he would use his backup plan, trapping this human was proving to be more complicated than he thought.

He waited impatiently for the ceremony to end with the Athar's confirmation. He snorted as this fool of Aldyr started to yell... He knew better than to cross the Xhan and the Xhana, especially during this type of ritual.

The human and Teneb left and for a few minutes nothing happened. The people around him were starting to get worried... The King played with the idea that perhaps this Aldyr had been right, but as whispers started to fly around the room, the door leading to the chamber started to glow.

During the whole thing, the priest and the priestess had remained completely stoic, not moving even a muscle.

The door banged opened and the two Athars came back.

There was something different about them, the King felt it immediately, a determination that wasn't there before... But it was their marks that drew his attention. Two glowing interlaced spirals were marring their skin on the right side of their face.

Cya approached them, raising her arms. She had always been one for drama, recalled the King, even when she was younger...

"The Athars were found worthy, witness their confirmation."

The other riders bowed to their two comrades. Now that was unexpected... From what he had heard, the human and Teneb were not on the best of terms with the others... It had to be a rank thing... This made the whole thing more important: if he could lure the human to him, he would obtain control over this group.



“Now, rise, Dragonriders, and face your fate!”

Luan’s words brought his attention back to the stage. Apparently the two of them had walked to the riders and cut a piece of their hair, burning it.

At those words, there was a flash of blinding light and when he could see again, he saw the white loin cloth they had been wearing had turned a blood red color.

He was a bit unsettled by this color. From what he could remember, the colors held a meaning and he was sure that blood red wasn’t for peace... It reminded him of the ceremonial outfit of the riders... An outfit they had inherited from the Knights of the old Age.

With a last bow, the seven youths, no, riders left. Cya and Luan exited by a concealed door and people started to leave.

The King saw Demenor heading outside, surely to speak to the Xhan. Enrys sent a sharp look at his daughter who left shortly after seeing it.

He glanced at his wife on his right side. Valera seemed lost in her thoughts. He had loved her dearly but since Najira’s arrival, she had refused to share his bed anymore. He knew he had hurt her, and her pride, but couldn’t she understand the importance of these breeding experiences?

It was a shame... He had been quite taken by her and although she came from Ynris she was a great Queen and a good support. She was clever, there was no denying it, and he wondered which side she would choose in this matter... She had seemed intrigued by the human and today she had taken a small bundle with her. What it was he didn’t know, but he was curious about it. Last night she had sent him quite a few suspicious glances but had said nothing.

The King shrugged as he stood up. Passing through the rows of seats, he barely suppressed a smile when he saw a small group huddled around the form of old Keal. Apparently he had been the one yelling during the ceremony: he was now gesticulating widely, pointing to his mouth, which had... disappeared for lack of better



words. Shaking his head he headed for the door and stepped outside, Doryan, Valera and Celen following him.

--

Harry and Teneb had been led back to the room where they had left their clothes. Quickly they had put on their riders' robes. Harry motioned to take the torque off when a hand stopped him.

Whirling on his heels, he came face to face with a Doija and nearly gasped as he recognized the Xhana.

"Don't take it off, it will act as a channel and an anchor."

Harry sighed, if this kept on, he would be loaded with jewels before he could leave...

Nodding he started to carefully strapped his blades in their usual places.

He could feel the Xhana's stare on him but ignored it, if she wanted to talk, she would make the first step.

"Athar."

He nodded respectfully. She was treating him accordingly to his status and he would do the same. He recalled that the Doija and Deiser that had taken care of them before the ceremony had barely reacted to his presence, treating him like any other riders.

"Yes, Xhana."

"Dark times are ahead of us, we foresaw it."

Harry nodded.

"An evil is about to be released, spreading to our worlds, one that was locked away at the beginning of this world's existence. Our temple will support your fight be it in your world or ours, our community will help you in any way possible. Lives are at stake... We



must be united for this fight, otherwise we'll fail. The Veil mustn't be destroyed, the Barrier must remain."

Harry bowed to the Xhana.

"On the behalf of me and my people, I thank you. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated as well as your knowledge."

"Don't thank us, Athar," said a masculine voice.

The Xhan entered the room and came to stand near his female counterpart.

"We are merely doing our duty... But will you be able to accept the help of people you dislike or will you be blinded by resentment?"

The question took Harry by surprise but had him thinking.

"I don't know... I think I could stand them if needed, even ask them for help if it was only way to succeed, but I don't know if I could forgive everything. There is one thing I know for sure... I won't forget, ever." His voice was harsh.

The two adults nodded slowly at his words.

"The Dragons chose well... May the stars shine on you, little brother," said the Xhan.

"And on you, Children of the Gods."

The Xhana smiled at his answer before leaving silently, Luan behind her.

Harry followed them with his eyes before returning to his blades. Teneb shook his head slightly, trying to decipher every word that had been said before resuming his check of his weapons.

"What was that all about?" Harry came face to face with Kobalt.

His face hardened slightly at the command. Kobalt might not have been as bad as the others but he wasn't exactly among Harry's favorite people at this time.



Realizing his mistake, the Elemental dropped his eyes.

“Could you explain us what you were talking about, please?”

Tilting his head, Harry glanced at Teneb who shrugged.

“Well, a Dark Lord was resurrected in my world, for the past year he had been killing, massacring, and torturing my people. A war is currently going on there and I’ll leave as soon as this is over, so you won’t have to put up with me.”

Operia had come to her friend’s side, frowning.

“What’s so special about this Lord of yours? Surely he wouldn’t be able to fight the power of the Dragons, you should have no problem defeating him...”

“He’s gathered an army of thousands of men, Death Eaters. He has managed to ally the Dark creatures. Only the Vampires and perhaps the werewolves have refused his offer and sided with my people, along with the Light creatures... He has been experimenting and will soon release his monsters into the world, cross-bred between the darkest creatures possible. He has been studying Necromancy and completed several minor Blood rituals.”

As Harry listed the deeds of the Dark Lord, the two youths had been paling gradually.

“But now he’s preparing something big, a ritual long forgotten. I don’t what it is, just that it involves a diary of someone called Djaira...”

Opheria gasped at the name, drawing odd stares from the others.

“Please, tell me you’re joking...” she pleaded.

Harry looked at her evenly.

“My friends are dying at his hands; I wouldn’t joke about something that serious.”

Opheria gave him a close look.



"I-I have to talk to the elders of my people, this-this could change everything..." She turned to Harry and Teneb. "I know we did nothing to deserve it, that should the circumstances be different, I probably wouldn't be saying it, but the situation being what it is, I wish to apologize again and should I be able to help, I will help, to at least redeem myself."

Harry and Teneb shared a glance over the Magis' head.

"Like I said to the Xhana, I don't know if I'll be able to forgive, maybe with time, but I won't forget what happened..." Harry answered finally.

Opheria shook her head, relieved that she hadn't been rejected completely. She turned to Teneb who was looking at her.

"You didn't completely abandon me, this counted a lot for me. I think I may forgive you with time, but like Harry said, I won't forget."

Opheria and Kobalt nodded, a bit relieved.

"Well, we should go, they'll be waiting for us," said Teneb, breaking the tensed silence.

He secured his sword on his side, checked up his clothes one last time and headed for the door. The others followed, but Harry remained behind, lost in his thought, the Xhan's words were echoing in his mind.

Could he forgive them?

He wasn't sure he could. He resented them for everything he had to go through... they drove him to suicide for God's sake.

How could he forgive them? They had hurt him, sure, not as bad as Garth and his friends, but they had rejected him without a second thought, never, ever stopping to wonder if it was right.

He couldn't dismiss it as if it had been nothing... it wasn't nothing... No he couldn't forgive, at least not completely. He would always hold them a little responsible.



He would fight with them if they joined him, he would watch their back should they need it, he might forgive Kobalt and Operia, maybe...

But above all, he wouldn't forget.

No.

Never.

Gathering his things, he looked around and left.

--

Well? Liked it? Hated it? Tell me what you thought of it!

Once again, thanks to all of you reviewers! THANK YOU!!

Naia



## Chapter Nineteen

By: Naia

He caught up with them quickly and settled at Teneb's side. They went back to the courtyard. Here, he saw that most of the people who had been present at the ceremony were there, gathered in small groups and talking to each other.

Upon seeing them, there was a wave of whispers.

Opheria, Kobalt and the others parted, going back to their family, the first two nodding at Harry and Teneb who after a second thought nodded back. Teneb spotted his father and Celen on their right and dragged Harry to them.

"You did great, both of you," said Doryan, a proud light in his eyes as he looked at his son.

Celen smirked at his friend.

"Dragon-soul?" he stated with a smirk, receiving a light punch in the shoulder.

"Oh! Shut up!" replied Teneb with a mock hurt expression.

In the corner of his eye, Harry saw Najira coming towards them. He didn't know how to act around her. On one hand she seemed to be the victim of her father's ambition and he wanted to help, but on the other he had been warned several times against her.

At this moment, he felt a delicate hand touched his forearm, startling him. Valera was standing near him, scrutinizing his face.

He returned her stare.

For a moment, their eyes locked, the Queen seeming to be trying to pierce through his soul.

Finally she spoke but her question was not the one Harry had been waiting for.



“Who are you?”

Harry nearly burst out laughing. Mirth showing in his eyes, his lips twitching, he tilted his head forwards.

“Harry Potter, Lady.”

She frowned slightly, trying to remember if she had heard this name before.

“And your parents were?”

“James Potter and Lily Evans Potter.” His answer was polite but he was curious about the motive behind her questions. “Why are you asking?”

“Nothing, I just thought I had seen eyes like yours before, that’s all...”

“I inherited them from my mother.”

“Well, I wanted to talk to you for a few minutes, if you accept of course.”

Glancing at her, Harry nodded after a few seconds of thinking. She motioned to him to follow her in the chapel.

“I didn’t want to talk about this before the others,” she started after having led them in a dark alcove.

“I’d trust Teneb with my life, his father seems trustworthy and Celen is your son.”

“I trust them, but I don’t want people to overhear us...”

Harry raised an eyebrow but let the matter slide.

“Then what did you want to talk about?”

The Queen gave him an assessing gaze.

“I wanted to give you this.”



She handed him a carefully wrapped bundle.

Harry took it and eyed it warily, trying to decide what to do about it.

“What is it?”

The Queen merely raised an eyebrow at him.

Weighing the pros and cons, he drew up his strongest shield and started to unwrap whatever this thing was. He was being paranoid, but he wasn't going to chance everything now that he was nearly out of the Elfish world.

As he put aside the last layer of material covering it, he found out a kind of book. The cover was a dark brown, with a symbol carved in copper threads. Four threads were coming from the four corners of the cover, gathering to form a spiraling circle in the middle, the threads being somewhat larger near the corners.

There was no title, no name, only what look like a lock on one side of the book, keeping it close. Harry frowned, the lock was odd, there were only copper threads weaved together, tightly knotted, there was no hole for a key, no way to unknot the thing.

He looked up at Valera.

“What should I do with it?”

She was eyeing him with a predatory look.

“Place your hand over the spiral,” she said.

Harry was about to do it when he looked up at her.

“What will it do?”

“If you're one of those I'm thinking , then it'll simply open, if you're not, then it will simply stay like this and you'll be none the worse for it.”

“Could I have your oath on it?”

Yes he was definitively getting paranoid...



She gave him a sad smile, before speaking.

"I, Valera Ryll Vyriannight, bind my life to Harry Potter by this present oath. Should I break it he would be free to deal with it in any way possible. By this oath, I guaranty that I have been speaking the truth. The Powers witness pledge."

There was a small flash as they both felt the connection of the oath build itself between them.

Nodding, Harry then placed his hand over the copper thing.

There was a faint glow of the thread and Harry felt something hit his aura, feeling it. As quickly as it was there, it disappeared, leaving the lock open.

"I was right then, you're one of his descendants," whispered Valera, her eyes gazing at the cover who was now a vibrant dark red.

Harry looked at her, puzzled.

"A descendant of who?"

"Arthur... Well, not directly, you didn't inherited his ears, luckily for you, if the portraits I saw where anything like their original."

"Arthur?"

"The Pendragon!" snapped the Queen.

Harry nearly gaped at her. He managed to keep a straight face while asking the question which was nagging him.

"How is it possible?"

"I don't know. I know the elves of Ynris watched over Arthur's family for a long time and interacted quite often with them, through the help of Emrys, or Merlin as you call him... The blood of the Pendragon has always wield power..."

"My mother was a muggle born."



Valera smiled.

“Arthur wasn’t a wizard.”

“I can’t be related to them... the names don’t even fit!”

“Your link to Arthur is not one of a direct heir, son of the first son of a first son. The line of the Pendragon ended many years ago...”

“Then how can I be one of his descendants?”

“I said the line ended, not that the blood was extinguished. The Pendragon’s family wasn’t fertile. They rarely got more than two children... At one point there was no male to carry on the name, only females, so the line ended, but the daughters passed on the blood of Pendragon to their descent. Apparently you inherited this blood through your mother... Your eyes don’t lie... Arthur had exactly the same, if the portraits are true as he lived and died before my time.”

Harry was trying to process this new information...

“How do you know so much about this? I thought elves kept out the human world?” he finally asked, stalling a little to gather back his wits.

“Like I said, my ancestors seemed interested in Pendragon’s family, they kept a record of the first generations, but after a few hundreds years, the rift deepened between our worlds, even for those of Ynris. Your people turned away from their beliefs into Nature’s powers to the appeal of technology.”

Accepting this explanation, but feeling that there was something more behind this, Harry turned his attention to the book still laying in his hands.

“What’s in this?”

Valera shrugged.

“I don’t know, we could not open it, only someone carrying Pendragon’s blood could, as it is said, she pointed to a few words, written in the old Language, on the edge of the cover, nearly invisible.



“The Dragon made me, I will answer the call of his blood,” read Harry, deciphering the faded letters. “What does it mean?” His question was genuine.

“I don’t know, open it.”

Hesitantly, Harry opened the cover, to find blank pages. Flipping through it, he found nothing more... except a small handwritten note.

“To whoever this book will be given. This diary helped me through my life, I bestowed it to my descent. May they gain strength from it.”

The queen folded her hands.

“That’s settled then, this is an elfish diary.”

Meeting the blank look of the dark haired young man before her, she elaborated.

“These diaries could be considered as faintly conscious. They will answer you and try to give you advice. Generally they help you order your thoughts, highlighting things you had overlooked, giving you another view of a problem, thus guiding you towards a possible solution.”

At the words of diary, Harry had stiffened, the events of his second year still present in his mind. At her explanations, he relaxed. Visibly this wasn’t exactly the same thing than Tom’s old diary. He didn’t know if he could completely trust the Queen and before writing anything in this he would check it up as thoroughly as possible and ask Arxeren...

He would also looked up his family tree to see what was exactly his relation with Arthur.

He turned to the Queen.

“How did you find yourself in its possession?”

The Queen frowned a bit.



"I think that my ancestors must have look for every Elvish object owned by humans and take them back, after the rift between our races was firmly drawn."

Harry assessed her answer and gave her a slight nod.

"Then I thank you for returning it to me."

Staying silent, the Queen only nodded back.

"We should go back to the others, they must be wondering what is keeping us in there," said finally the Queen , heading for the door of the chapel.

Harry followed her and they quickly walked back to the others. He was so lost in his thought that he barely registered that he was back in the courtyard.

Sensing it was better to leave him alone, Teneb didn't ask him anything.

Instead he resumed his talk with his father and Celen. Their faces were grave and for a moment, Harry was tempted to ask them what was the matter, but he went back to his own thoughts.

So he was a descendant of Arthur? He was a bit doubtful about it... But would check on it as soon as possible, maybe it could be an advantage, Queen Valera had said that the blood of the Pendragon was powerful... He would leave as soon as possible, once the ball was over, even if it was in the dead of the night. He would go straight to Hogwarts, Hogsmeade was too dangerous and Diagon Alley had been destroyed. Yes, going to Hogwarts was the better course of action. He would go to see Dumbledore. The headmaster would know what to do. And then he would see his friend, and Sirius, and the Weasleys... A small smile appeared on his face... He wondered how they would react about him. He had changed, he had come to realize it, but they had to have too. War did this to people. Silently, he cursed Voldemort to the deepest hell... This man would pay for his crimes, he would make sure of it.



He broke from this train of thought, knowing it would only anger him more than he already was. Shaking his head slightly, he focused back on the situation at hand, looking up, he saw that it was nearly noon... Only a few hours and he would be out of here.

Despite his resolve not to come back again, he thought that perhaps he would, if only to see Teneb. He was going to miss him. Sure Ron and Hermione would always be his first true friends, but they would never be able to fully understand what he went through. Teneb could. He had lived through some of it and moreover, the elf knew everything about him, well, nearly everything... There were barely any secrets remaining between the two of them and as the very thought of it would have made him commit whoever told him that he would come to trust and like an elf to the closest mental ward, he couldn't deny the fact that Teneb had nearly become a brother to him and should he betrayed Harry's trust, Harry didn't know what would happen.

At this moment, he saw something in the corner of his eye: the King was talking to his daughter, griping her arm roughly. The girl looked like she was in pain and was staring nervously at her father. She nodded quickly to him before coming towards them, again, and this time they wouldn't be anyone to help him avoid her.

He didn't know how to act with her. For now he'd better play along.

She approached them smiling.

"You were great, Harry, you too Teneb," she added in an afterthought. "Father told me we were going to ride back. You should get ready." She had a smile plastered on her face, her eyes looking at Harry.

Nodding, they headed for their horses as stable hands were bringing them back in the courtyard. Harry immediately spotted Shadow as the boy which he had handed Shadow to was checking the tack, ensuring that it was correctly done. As he came closer, Harry spotted the ginger head looking through the slits of the bag.

The young boy seemed surer of himself as he stood near the stallion. Shadow neighed a little upon seeing his rider, earning a smile from the dark-haired wizard.



"I trust he behaved well?" he asked, caressing the strong, beautifully arched neck, relishing in the softness of the fur.

"Yes, Athar."

Harry looked sharply at him.

"Not as afraid as before," he asked with an eyebrow raised.

The boy flushed at him.

"No, Athar..."

"And why?" Harry's question was genuine.

"Your horse, he likes you a lot, and no horse would like someone who wasn't worthy..."

Harry gave him a small smile. This explanation would have made little sense to the court men, but he was warmed a bit by the acceptance he saw in the boy's eyes.

"What's your name and age?"

"Eryn, Athar, I'm twelve."

Harry tilted his head.

"Well, Eryn, I'll remember that you showed me more wisdom than most of your elders."

Blushing, Eryn bowed at him.

"Where are your parents?"

The boy's face saddened.

"I'm an orphan, the temples are my homes now."

Harry sobered up.



“I’m sorry. Do you have any pastimes?” he said, trying to divert the talk to more enjoyable subjects.

“I love horses...” Eryn said, giving the black stallion an adoring look. “And this one is one of the most amazing one I’ve ever seen.”

Seeming to understand what was being said, Shadow raised his head high up, snorting.

Harry’s laugh echoed in the yard as pat the horse’s neck.

“Well, Eryn, I’ll remember your wisdom and one day I’ll have to thank you for it.”

He silenced the boy’s protestations with a look.

“Keep this as a reminder.”

Swiftly, he cut a bit of the mane of his stallion and handed it to the boy.

With a graceful jump he was on his horse’s back, adjusting the reins.

“We’ll meet again, Eryn.”

As he directed his mount towards the exit, he wondered why he had said so, after all he had no intentions whatsoever to come back. But deep inside, he knew he would see the boy again.

He waited for everyone to start moving, taking back his place behind Teneb, who had been forced to ride along his father, Celen and the King once again.

Najira was back to his side.

“You were impressive, Harry,” she said, breaking the silence.

He remained silent. She raised her hand to brush aside a blond strand of hair that kept flying back to her face, because of the wind which hadn’t died down.



Harry's eyes narrowed as he saw red marks on her skin, which had previously been hidden by her sleeves.

"Who did this to you?" He asked sharply.

Najira looked at him, looking a little uneasy.

"I fell down the stairs," she replied evenly.

Raising his eyebrow, Harry gave her a disbelieving look, but didn't pry, knowing fully well who must have done it to her.

"You fell..." his voice showing that he didn't believe her for a second.

"Yes," she replied in the same blank voice.

Deciding to drop the matter since it didn't look like she was about to spill the truth to him. He knew he wouldn't have, should the situation had been reversed.

"What are we going to do?"

"Well, the ball is going to take place just after dinner and you're expected to stay at the castle for lunch and dinner."

Harry's mouth twisted with disgust at the mention of the ball, something which wasn't missed by the girl at his side.

She looked up at him.

"I-I have something to ask you about this."

He nodded sharply.

"You know I have to seduce you, and my father won't be happy I failed, he already made this clear to me... But if you could come with me to the ball, it would buy me some time..." as he didn't answer it, she hurriedly added. "But you don't have to... I-I'm sorry..."

Harry held up his right hand, his left one still holding the reins.



“I think that for your sake, I can accept to go with you, but this doesn't mean anything, I do it to prevent you from reserving punishment because of me. I don't trust you, remember it.”

The girl nodded, quite relieved.

“Thank you,” she said quietly.

They rode in silence until they reached the castle.

As he arrived in sight of the palace, Harry felt Dragons' presence.

Teneb, I think the Elders are here...

Yes, I sensed them too... They're... powerful.

The word was an understatement. Harry could feel the gentle rolls of powers spreading from the area they were staying in.

He turned on his saddle and saw that all the riders present had paled and that Demenor's face was ashen. Yes, they had reasons to be afraid, but they had put themselves in this predicament and he didn't feel even slightly guilty at being one of the cause of what was about to happen.

Demenor directed his horse out of the procession and urged him forwards to catch up with the King.

They exchanged a few words Harry couldn't catch, the King nodded and Demenor went back to his place, slightly behind Harry.

They arrived in the city, a few minutes later and soon everyone was back to the castle.

Once the horses were sent to the stables; the King walked up a few steps and raised his arms, asking for silence.

Slowly everyone shushed.

“Today we witnessed the final induction of those new riders. The ball will celebrate this happy day. On more serious issue, I must ask the members of the council, all of the riders, as well as those who failed



to be chosen and the families of all the former twelve Daryns to come with me. The Dragon's council has gathered to give us their decisions. I expect to meet you all in the Council chamber."

Whispers flew all over the assembled crowd as those called followed the King in the castle in small groups. The remaining people scattered around, trying to guess what would happen, as well as talking about the induction, the soul-pictures, the rider's appearance, the two Athars' confirmation, describing everything to those who didn't come.

Harry, Najira still near him, walked briskly to Teneb, his face blank.

"Ready?"

"Yes," Teneb voice was a bit shaky, but he was standing firm. Extending his arm, he clasped his forearm with Teneb's. Looking in each other's eyes, they gave strength to the other, reassuring themselves about their choice. Smiling tentatively, Teneb withdrew his arm.

"Thanks Harry."

"No need, now, let's go, they'll be waiting for us."

He had forgotten completely about the young part Veela, but she had not missed anything of the scene which had took place before her, storing it in her mind for later use.

They walked, Harry following his friend through the corridors, shaking his head at the number of turns they had to take. Finally they arrived before a big door. People were entering, talking quietly between themselves. Harry could sense the power of the dragon coming through the doors.

"How could they enter?"

Teneb shrugged.

"We'll see, my guess is as good as yours."



They stepped through the door, steeling themselves for what was about to take place.

--

They immediately looked around and Harry immediately though he had stepped in a tribunal.

There were a main, rectangular table, currently occupied by nine... people? Harry frowned at the seated figures. The power was rolling out of them. And their aura wasn't like anything he had seen before. They weren't elves, or humans, neither were they Magis or Elementals. He had a strange feeling about them as he stared at them. They turned to them, and immediately, realization dawned on him. It didn't matter if he thought it couldn't be possible, this was the only logical explanation. From the sharp intake of breath of his friend, Teneb seemed to have reached the same conclusion.

They approached the nine figures assembled at the table, and halting in front of them, bowed deeply, both hands crossed on their hearts, falling on one knee.

Hearing the sounds of boots on the stone grounds they glanced and saw that Opheria and Kobalt had mimicked their actions.

One of the woman, dressed in a light red, nearly pink dress, with golden hair and strange golden eyes, gave them a small smile and raising a delicate hand, motioned to them to stand up.

°Rise, youngling. Athars, we already told you, you do not have to bow to us,° she said with a slightly scolding tone in her voice.

With a smile, the four of them rose to their feet and Harry took a good look at them. The platinum-haired, cerulean-eyed man near the woman had to be Altai, if his azure outfit was true to his nature, so the woman was Aurine. On her left, stood a somber looking man with ebony hair and dark purple eyes, so dark you could think them to be black. He was wearing the same outfit than all the men with him had, as all the women wore the same type of dress, the colors being the only difference. The men had fitting pants with a tunic looking a lot like the Athar's, minus the high collar, something Harry was envious



for. There wasn't any drawing of flames or of a Dragon on theirs, the sleeves ending with a large white hem. A long flowing cloak completed the outfit. It seemed quite plain, but as they moved, the clothes seemed to shine in a nearly metallic way.

All of them, even the women had swords hanging at their side, as well as a medallion resting on their chest, the metal or stone it was made of varying.

The dresses of the women were tight fitting, high-collared, with long sleeves sticking to their arms like a second skin. A kind of iridescent material formed an outer sleeve, flowing down from the shoulder to the hand. Harry went back to his examination of the Elders' human forms.

On the far right, was seated a tall red-head dressed in flaming red. He turned his eyes towards him and with a smile, bowed his head. Harry was mesmerized by his eyes: a glowing red, but not once did he link them with Voldemort's. The Elder's, Phaist's, eyes were alive with barely restrained power, flames dancing in his red orbs. Next to him, was sitting a woman, Dia, who seemed to live beyond time and aging. Her features were aristocratic, and enhanced by her light gray dress, her storming gray eyes seemed to light mysteries and secrets. The white hair gave her an aura of wisdom, one that Chrisianne, though looking a bit like her, had never had. On her side sat Seid. Black hair, so black it had blue highlights, deep silvery blue eyes and blue clothes, he embodied water. Then came Cehra, a chestnut-haired woman with calm hazel eyes and bronze skin, bronze color flattered by her green and beige dress. In the middle, royal, sat Gae and Rexeran. Gae was a brunette with long curly hair, strange rainbow eyes and a creamy complexion. Her silver dress enhanced the beauty of her body and her aura. She looked like a queen and held herself like one, compassion and fairness carved in her appearance. On her side was sitting Rexeran. Taller than Gae, his rainbow eyes was sweeping over the room, his vision blocked a bit by a strand of his reddish blond hair. The sight of him, dressed in his golden outfit was breath taking. Wisdom, power seemed embedded in his very being.



Harry ended his assessment of the nine Elders. How could they have managed to change into humans, he didn't know, but he would ask Arxeren. He returned his attention to the room. Tribunal. That was the word to describe it. Rows of seats were facing the table where the Elders were settled, and though the table was bathed into a bright light, the rest of the room was placed in a dim one, creating a solemn atmosphere.

Harry spotted the two seats Teneb and he had created the previous night on the front row on the left side, a bit separated from the others. Shrugging, he walked to it and sat on one of them. Teneb followed his example and sat next to him.

Doryan sat at his son's side and Celen next to him. The King and his Queen were seated on the other side of the room. The chamber was already half filled. Harry turned as he heard someone sit behind him and was surprised to see Opheria and Kobalt. Next to them were four adults Harry assumed were their parents. He felt the eyes of Opheria's father pierce him and faced the man. He had the usual look of his race: The four-fingered hand, the white hair he had tied back, the orange eyes which were staring suspiciously at him, suspiciously and even a bit dreadfully. Frowning at this, Harry remembered Opheria's shock upon hearing the name of the book Voldemort was using for his ritual. Yes, the Magis must have been told this little piece of information and apparently knew more than he was letting on. The man leaned forwards and whispered in Harry's ear.

"Hu-..." a sharp kick in the shin from his daughter stopped him. "Harry, I'd like to talk with you." He paused. "My daughter told me and some of the elders of our race a few things you told her today and we'd appreciate to verify her words."

Harry's eyes narrowed at this.

"If what she said turned out to be true, what would you do? Would you help? Or would you protect your world and leave us die?"

The Magis returned his glare evenly.

"If what you affirmed is true, we would have no choice left than help you. Humans on their own couldn't counteract it completely, and no



matter how much I dislike your race, I won't let the unnamed ones be freed because of this."

Harry eyed him for a few seconds, gauging him.

He was afraid, this was obvious and his fear made him honest. The Magis disliked him, but apparently thought the situation grave enough to bear with his presence. He made his decision.

"I'll talk to you."

The Magis nodded.

"Wait for us once this is over." He started to lean back in his seat when his daughter nudged him in his ribs. Ophelia was frowning at him. "Thank you," he added through barred teeth.

Harry nodded and turned to face the Elders again.

By now, nearly everyone was seated and those late were hurrying through the entrance.

Finally, the door closed itself and Altai spoke up, his voice echoing in the room.

°We gathered you today to announce our decision regarding the events which took place at the Headquarters.°

Aurine followed her voice soft but strong.

°We usually keep out of rider's problems, but the length things reached forced us to take some measures.°

Seid followed his tone silky.

°The riders have always been chosen accordingly to a level of power, but were above all asked to possess several qualities and uphold a moral code during their life.°

Phaist continued.



°We had wanted to ensure that no matter what would happen, there would be a group of people, fair and objective, who would be able to deal with situations without a clouded judgment. We had to be sure that our moral would not be lost, that fairness, tolerance, open-mindedness, helpfulness, altruism, compassion would not disappear, that our laws would be remembered.°

There was a silence which Cehra broke.

°Our race bonded to yours to preserve the balance of power. And the creation of this institution proved to work, the riders proved to be a good solution to our problem.° Her tone grew slightly angered. °We had seen the rise of greed, individualism, selfishness and narrow-mindedness, we witnessed the parting of the humans, but we thought the riders would be immune to these feelings.°

°We were wrong,° stated Dia, her melodious voice tinted with disappointment. °We did not see them slowly corrupt you, we did not see the ideals for which riders had always stood up be slowly forgotten.°

°But never, did we think that bigotry would ensnare and cloud the judgment of those we had deemed worthy to ride us. Never did we think that the riders would strike at one of those we put in their care out of prejudices, discrimination or blind hate.° Des' tenor voice was sharp and harsh. °Never did we think we'd have to stand in this room.°

Finally Gae spoke up.

°Upon realizing what our blind trust in the riders had brought on us, we had no choice but to judge and try to right the situation.°

Rexeran continued.

°The Council gathered and reached these decisions. These were chosen taking into account the deeds of those guilty as well as their motives.°

He stood up, his power nearly visible around him.



°Before the appalling behavior of the riders, a probation period was decided, during which the link between bonded people and their dragon will be temporarily severed. Should the circumstances required our help, we will come, but be warned, should you place the blame on someone else to ease your conscience, we will sever the bond completely. Think about what you did, either by your own actions, or by your lack of action.°

The riders remained silent. They knew better than to protest and realized that the Elders had been lenient. But Rexeran was not finished.

°This was decided to punish the corrupting of our code you have allowed.°

Cehra spoke up.

°We could have forgiven you for this offense, but your acts went even further and lead to the mental abuse of one your peers.° She paused. °You were trusted with the care of the youths who were chosen, but you failed to show fairness and let your prejudices overcome your duty and blind your judgment, breaking one of our laws by bringing voluntary pain upon one of you. You let an event old of 20,000 year direct your actions and held responsible someone who was innocent of this and didn't even know of it. You showed blatant disregard for your duty by dismissing our choice and used your status to mentally harm one of those place under your care°

Des followed.

°For this accusation, all those guilty of this will have their power lowered to the level of an average human since the rift between your race motivated your actions. Maybe this will give you an insight of this race and heal this rift. Your powers will remain at this level until you understand your action and see beyond the prejudice. Until then they will not change. Those gifted with Elemental abilities will keep their control over them but have the power level lowered to have it balance their new magical and physical level. So stated to decreed.° A small light surrounded several people in the room.



At this, there were horrified shouts, but Harry could not help but find the punishment fitting. It might make them understand, but he doubted it, they were too deeply ensconced in their beliefs to even consider it.

A glare of Rexeran silenced the protestations, for now, but Harry knew that they would come back later and had a feeling that he would be held responsible for this. He shrugged. He couldn't care less about what a bunch of blind fools thought of him, he might come back but it wouldn't be to see them. He would like to meet Eryn again, the boy's attitude had been a change from the usual one. But coming to think about it, it seemed that nearly all the members of the temple had not been too prejudiced towards him. He could also learn to like Teneb's family and even Celen and the Queen.

°It was also decided that those receiving this punishment, would stay one year in the human world. So decreed°

This declaration brought chaos in the room, those who knew they would receive this punishment were on their feet, yelling that they couldn't do this. Some looked disgusted at the very idea of being surrounded by humans for a year, others were in shock...

Harry was frowning at the Elders. What were they playing at? They knew of the situation of the human world. Prejudiced people who knew nothing of his world's functioning wouldn't last a week.

*Elder, I hope you know what you're doing,* he sent mentally to Rexeran, calm but worried.

The amused reply came back quickly.

Don't worry, Astyan, we're aware of the consequences of this decision. And you may call me by name. As my bonded you have this right.

Harry only nodded, but couldn't suppress a feeling of dread about this. He focused back on the situation at hand to hear Effilin yell, rather loudly.



“You can’t make us do this! You can’t make us stoop at the level of human weaklings! You can’t have us live with those frauds, those weak, back stabbing whelps!”

Harry snorted. The Fighting master really needed to be a little more creative in his insults, these lines were getting old. But the next comment didn’t amuse him.

“You can’t have us live with cowards for a year”

Harry had witnessed all the attacks of Voldemort, and had seen the courage of those fighting against him, sometimes sacrificing themselves to allow others to escape, the courage of the prisoners, who were tortured to death but kept their secrets or killed themselves before the Dark Lord could extract the information from them. Hearing them labeled as cowards was an insult to the memory of all these heroes. He wouldn’t stand for that. He closed his eyes, calming himself and raised his voice.

“I don’t think my people are the cowards, seeing as you’re the ones too scared to cope with the punishments you brought upon yourselves.”

Silence had fallen on the room as he spoke up and every pair of eyes were on him. He didn’t have to turn to know that Effilin had to have turned a lovely purple shade.

“Now, you little fraud, how dare you call me a coward!”

“Simply by saying it.”

“You’re the one responsible for this!” Rage was filling his voice.

This time Harry turned to face the elf, his green eyes blazing.

“Don’t even start on this! I didn’t force you to act the way you did, I didn’t ask you do behave as you did, I didn’t place you under a spell. YOU, and only YOU, brought this upon yourselves! But now you can’t cope with the consequences. How courageous! How brave! This clearly proves who the real cowards are!” His tone was dripping with



sarcasm. Inwardly, he thought Professor Snape would have been proud.

Effilin looked like he was going to throw a fit.

“I’m not scared!”

“In this case I’m delighted,” Harry nearly spat the last word, “to know you’ll comply to the Elders’ decision.” He smirked. He knew he had the master cornered and Effilin had realized it too: he couldn’t back down now, not without losing his pride.

The Master sat down heavily, glaring at Harry who wasn’t in the least touched by it.

Well done Astyan.

The amused mental voice of Rexeran echoed in his head.

Seid, seeing that a relative calm had come back over the room, took this opportunity to resume their speech.

°Now, two last issues must be dealt with.” He paused slightly. “First we want the rift between your world and the other races to be healed.°

He didn’t let them protest.

°Dark times are coming, stand united or perish, the choice is yours to make, but know that division will only bring the doom of your world as you know him. This had been going on for far too long and we are also faulty for allowing this resentment to root itself in your races and developed into hate and discrimination. You will try to build back the bridges between your civilization, and we’ll see to it. So stated, so decreed.°

Aurine continued.

°The last issue which we had to deal with concerned the action of some of the Dragons’ chosen. Your beliefs went so deep that they led some of you to break one of the laws we prized the most. The one



stating that, no matter the situation, no rider will actively try to injure one of his peers or bring physical harm to a living being that could mean his death.°

Her eyes grew hard.

°This law was broken twice. Both times the perpetrators knew fully well what they were doing. Now I ask them to stand before us and face the consequences of their acts.°

Gae spoke up.

°We call Garth, Vlad, Xjahl, Ribor and Chrisianne to stand before us.°

Whispers flew over the room as the five youths stood up and walked to the Elders. All of them were shaking under the icy stares of the nine figures.

°You were chosen, but chose to abuse of your powers to cause harm and relished in the pain you gave. Do you deny it?°

None of them moved, neither agreeing, neither denying.

°Garth , to these crimes, you added a deliberate break of the Fundamental rules of Duel. Do you deny it?°

The young Magis remained silent.

°Does any of you have something to say for his defense before we deliver our judgment?°

Garth turned to Harry with a hateful gaze. The wizard repressed a shudder at the crazed glint in his eyes.

“This scum is responsible of all of this, he’s a freak... a human parasite, and the only good parasites are dead ones.”

The Elders shook their heads at these words.

°Very well, now, hear our sentence. The five of you will face the Powers’ judgment. Vlad, Xjahl, Ribor and Chrisianne, you are stripped of all your powers and will only recover them if you have a



true change of heart, so decreed. You are to stay at the temple under the orders of the Doijas and the Deisers to maybe learn of your mistakes. Garth, you are definitively stripped of your powers and status. Your fate will be decided by the Powers. So decreed.° A light surrounded the youths and soon most of them were on their knees, begging for the Elders to reconsider their decision.

Cries of outrage from their families erupted in the room.

°SILENCE° roared Rexeran. In a deadly voice he continued. °Our decision is definitive, and we will not reconsider it. Their action are unforgivable and we showed leniency only because of their age.° He turned to Harry and Teneb.

°I ask the Athars' permission to show one of the events which warranted these youths this fate.°

Harry and Teneb felt all eyes on them.

*Harry?*

*I don't care anymore, it's not like I'll have to see them again... what about you?*

Teneb shrugged, before turning to the Elders and giving his reluctant consent.

°To ensure the objectiveness of this, the memories will be extracted from the accused and I'll ask one of you to do it.°

Des looked through the room.

°Counselor Ferim, would you step forwards. Does everyone agree to the integrity of the counselor Ferim?°

Nods of agreement were seen in the room.

An old elf walked down the rows of seats, helping himself with his cane. He stopped before the Elders and bowed to them.

°Which memory do you wish to vision, and from who?° he asked evenly, taking a stone from one of his pocket.



Phaist answered.

°We wish to vision Garth's memory of the events following the naming ceremony two days ago.°

The old elf nodded and concentrated. Garth tried to escape but he seemed to be paralyzed. The scene started to appear and soon the events displayed themselves. Harry and Teneb paid little attention to it, deep in thought. Harry heard vaguely some cries but he couldn't decide if they were of disgust or of approbation.

Finally, the memory ended as Garth left them both, their tendons cut, bleeding profusely on the ground, unconscious because of the Dolorais potion.

Harry stilled his feature in a cold mask as he looked around the room. He noticed Opheria was staring at the fading pictures with a horrified expression, mirrored by Kobalt. He couldn't really see everyone's reaction, the light was too dim.

Rexeran's voice boomed through the room.

°Does this satisfy your desire for explanation, or should I ask for more?°

Silence answered him. Most of the people sitting had their eyes still glued to the place where the scene had been displayed, incredulous looks on their faces

°The Xhan and the Xhana were warned and will have prepared everything for the Powers' judgment by tomorrow.°

°Be sure to attend to this trial. Should we learn you didn't, the consequences will be dire.° Des' voice was laced with threats.

It was Altai which spoke up last.

°Remember, that the only ones guilty in this room are yourselves, don't try to cast the blame upon someone else, we'd be extremely displeased should this happen.°



With that, the nine figures stood up and let their power leak through them. Harry felt it gather and spread in the room in a huge wave, washing through them.

°This is our judgment, may the Powers witness our decisions and bless them. May they ensure the repayment of the wrong doing of those assembled here and enforced our sentences. So witnessed, so decreed.°

They, then, started to dissolve and soon only nine beams of light remained. They shot up towards the ceiling and disappeared.

Harry leant back in his seat, waiting for chaos to break loose.

He didn't have to wait long, it took only a few seconds for people to process everything which had been said and for them to start shouting. Massaging his temples, he tried to block out the noise with little success.

It was giving him a bloody headache. Did they have to yell for everything? His stomach growled softly, reminding him he had not eaten anything since breakfast and that it was an hour past noon at least, or two or three...

Finally, the King stood up. His face was grim.

"The Dragons gave us their judgment, we accept it."

This calmed the room, but Harry could see a few people who seemed about to have a stroke. The King's reaction surprised him a bit, but well... He shrugged.

"Now," continued Enrys, "Lunch is awaiting us, the Council will be held after to deal with the orders from the Elders."

Loud murmuring sprang up as Enrys and Valera left the room. Soon other people followed, murmuring to each others. Teneb stood up, his face a little pale; watching what had happened to them hadn't been a nice thing. When it had happened, he had been unconscious, but now he had seen everything and it left him a bit sick.



“Harry? Are you coming?”

Shaking his head, the dark-haired wizard motioned to Opheria’s father and a few old looking Magis which were gathering behind him.

Understanding dawned on the young elf and determination appeared in his eyes. His mouth set in a thin line as he sat back.

Doryan turned to Harry, questioningly.

“Opheria’s father, and some other Magis wished to talk to me about the ritual I mentioned before.”

Nodding, Doryan seat himself back, wishing apparently to be there for this talk. Seeing this, Celen followed their example.

Once everyone else had left, Harry stood up and straightened his clothes before walking to the six remaining Magis. Opheria and Kobalt had also stayed behind. Besides Opheria’s father, the five others seemed quite old and Harry could tell they were quite important, from their ceremonial looking robes.

He tilted his head slightly at them and waited for them to speak first.

Finally as the silence stretched on, one of them, with long intricately braided hair looked at Harry.

“One of our youth reported to us that you had said that someone in your world was performing a ritual using Djaira’s diary. Could you prove this affirmation.”

Doryan had paled slightly, remembering what Harry had showed him the previous day.

Harry looked them carefully over.

“Does it matter if you believe me or not?” he finally asked.

The Magis orange eyes pierced through him.

“This could change a lot of things. And if it should be true, it would assure you of our help.”



Harry wondered what was so bad that it could push people who disliked and scorned humans like them to propose their help. He made up his mind. He wasn't going to pass this occasion.

"Before showing you, I want your oath, on your powers and life that you won't pry into my mind."

They all stared at him strangely but quickly looked away, unnerved by the intensity of his gaze. Quickly they took this oath.

Nodding sharply, Harry looked at them.

"If any of you have empathic abilities, I advise him to block them as much as possible, particularly you Celen. An empath as strong as you will not be able to bear this... even if I filter it."

Seeing the stubborn look in Celen's eyes, he sighed and turned to Teneb.

The elf looked at his friend.

"Believe him Celen, I had to witness this vision and it had me throwing up for a few minutes and left me on my knees, shaking for a long time.

Celen seemed to be torn but after casting a last look at Harry, raised up a strong mental shield around himself. Harry sensed that two of the Magis had done so. Sighing he dropped his own shields.

"You'll witness one of the visions I experimented. Let's go."

He felt them enter his mind and did nothing to stop them except warding more heavily his mind, leaving only a small channel for their presence. He then called up one of his vision and let it display, trying very hard not to think about it. This vision had been a week after the destruction of Beauxbâtons. Voldemort hadn't been able to follow his plan since Wormtail hadn't been able to pass the wards of Hogwarts, Dumbledore having placed defenses against non-keyed in Animagi. Voldemort had been forced to resort to using the children of his men to gather the information needed and they couldn't get much of it...



So he had had to postpone his attack against Hogwarts, but that didn't mean he had been resting...

### **Vision:**

Voldemort was standing in his personal chambers, two other men were there. Several objects were laying on the table. A book was opened before him. It was a small brown leather book. Two others, much more thinner laid besides it.

"What did you found?"

One of the men bowed to the Dark Lord.

"From what Djaira wrote in her diary, she had been working with a man called Luctan. From her notes, we managed to rebuild most of the ritual, but there are a few points to clear, which should be done quickly. Doeron and Grindelwald left quite a few useful notes, that we were able to use, thanks to your clear translating and your understanding of the charades, Grindelwald placed in his own book, but none of them had managed to obtain the complete ritual. I believe that Grindelwald had more information, but he left it in his diary and your men weren't able to find it."

The Dark Lord frowned at this.

"I'll be sure to remind them of that," he said, his red eyes full of promise of pain and suffering.

The second man resumed their explanation.

"The ritual requires a large amount of Dark energies. They'll have to be stored in the Maya's Heart. Once the ruby will turn dark, you'll know you have enough of it. These energies will have to be gathered by Neron's dagger and nothing else."

Voldemort nodded at this, his eyes gleaming at this idea, eyeing the dagger. The long blade was marred with a few brown spots that not even magic could erase. The handle supported another ruby. One of the first step in the ritual had been to connect this one to the Maya's



heart, using Necromancy, so that the energies would store themselves directly in the stone.

“But what about the Shadow’s knife?”

The first one answered.

“The final steps of the ritual will require the sacrifice of a virgin. It will have to be done with this knife.”

“How long will it take to complete the ritual.”

One of them answered.

“It all depends of the time it takes you to gather enough energy. Once this will be done, it should take you a day to complete it.”

The other followed.

“We’d advise you to wear the Desert’s burn and the Sun bracelet. None of those who tried this ritual used them, but Djaira advised to use things to stabilize the energies a bit. These two will serve this purpose well enough.”

Nodding, the Dark Lord clasped the amulet around his neck, feeling its power, and the bracelet on his right wrist, the hand which would be holding the wand or the dagger.

“Keep working, I expect you to finish completing the ritual as soon as possible.”

The two men bowed and exited, taking the books with them.

Voldemort seemed to think for a while, then took the dagger and the huge ruby before leaving. He went to his own torture chambers. Upon opening the door a shrill scream could be heard, as well as sobbing, begging. A smile appeared on his lips. It wasn’t that he had a particular knack for torture, he personally enjoyed mental tortures more than physical ones, but it gave him a way to instill fear in his men. They knew that should they betray him or fail him greatly, they



would end down there. And it was also a way for some of his more twisted servants to indulge their urges.

He stepped in the room, looking around he saw some of his men at work. His eyes swept around, looking for someone, looking over the writhing victims without emotions. There weren't a lot of them today: a man, three women and a small boy. He narrowed his eyes at this. Generally they didn't bring children there, they didn't last long enough for it to be entertaining. He, himself used children for his rituals: they were innocence embodied and supplied him with a lot of power through their suffering and death. It didn't matter if it took a long time for them to die or not, the energies in that case were the same... Looking at the man who was working on the boy, he indulged a small smile. Yes, Justus was known for his peculiar tastes and apparently had decided to indulge himself with a new fantasy. He kept on looking around and finally spotted the one he had been searching in the back. Rodolphe Lestrangle was eyeing a woman with a crazed glint in his eyes, mixed with a pleasure which seemed nearly orgasmic. The woman was shackled to the wall, her shoulders apparently dislocated from the trashing she must have done in the beginning. Her body was naked, and supported deep burn marks which seemed to be forming a drawing on her skin. Her feet were a mangled mess of bones and flesh. Her head was bowed, but Voldemort knew she wasn't unconscious. This was why Rodolphe was one of his best torturers, with Keldan. He knew just the amount of pain to apply to do the worst damage without killing or sending his victim unconscious. He approached the red-hot metallic stick to the skin of the woman who whimpered upon feeling the heat near her skin.

"Rodolphe?"

The stick was taken away from her skin as the man looked up at his lord.

"Yes, my Lord?"

"I have a task for you."

Lestrangle bowed his head, waiting for his Lord command.



“You are one of my best torturers, and I’m trusting you with a matter of great importance.” He handed the man the dagger. Lestrangle took it reverently, recognizing it immediately. “I want you to use this dagger in your work. Make sure to have your victims suffer as long as possible. I trust to find enough ways to use this blade to its fullest.”

“My lord.”

Voldemort gave him a smile.

“A meeting is being held in a few moments, I would like you to do a demonstration of your skills to your comrades and to our new members. Several women were captured last night and one of them managed to kill one of us with a knife. I want it to be a lesson. The other prisoners would be there as well.”

Indeed there had been an induction the previous night and the new members had participated to a raid in a muggle town. As usual, they had brought back several people, mostly women, but also a few girls and boys. The Dark Lord knew that killing was enhancing the darkest desires of his men and as their pureblood wives couldn’t be used to satisfy them, he was gathering mudbloods, halfbloods and muggles to allow his men to satisfy those urges accordingly to their personal tastes. He had also noticed that one of the best ways to break a woman’s spirit was collective and continued rape, very few managed to resist to this. He had been using this method on the female fighters his men had been bringing in. First he would let his men toy with them for one or two days, then they would go to the torture chambers.

A feral grin appeared on Rodolphe’s lips upon hearing his master’s demand.

“And remember, you are only to use the dagger. The meeting will be held in fifteen minutes.”

He left Rodolphe to his work and crossed the chamber again to go to the throne room. Sitting here, he placed the ruby above the seat, as the stone seemed to start filling itself with a blood red liquid.

So Rodolphe had started using the dagger... At least he knew it was working. He looked on his left, eyeing the remains of the girl’s body



he had used two nights ago to summon a few minor demons. He had wanted to test the cup and had been satisfied to see it working. He'd have to tell one of his servants to dispose of the body.

As the Death Eaters started to enter he leaned back in his seat, readying himself for the spectacle.

### End of the Vision

Harry stopped the vision here. He had suppressed the goriest scenes of tortures, but hadn't been able to suppress them all, as it was putting a lot of strain on him. Voldemort was a twisted man, but Harry couldn't deny the man's intelligence and genius when it came to the darkest parts of magic. He wasn't a crazy loon who reveled in the pain he inflicted others. He was crazy, he enjoyed the suffering of his victims, but he wasn't doing this only for his personal pleasure, it served his purpose. No, Harry wasn't underestimating the Dark Lord...

He sighed and pushed the presences out of his mind, rebuilding his barriers and shields as he did so. Looking around he saw that Ophelia was kneeling on the floor, a pool of vomit near her, Kobalt at her side, his arms around her shoulders. The Water Elemental was deeply shaken as showed his ashen face and looked like he might be sick himself. Celen was in the same state than Ophelia with Teneb at his side, trying to comfort him. Doryan was a ghostly shade of white, The Magis' skins was nearly translucent, their eyes a yellowish green. The two of them which had erected mental shields seemed to fare with the vision a little better.

Ophelia's father was staring at him.

"How... can you stay so calm after seeing this?" he stuttered.

Harry eyed him.

"I've been having these visions for several months, nearly nightly. I have learned to hide what I feel. The riders would have enjoyed exploiting it, had I showed a weakness."

He stared at them.



“And then I imagined all the things I would do to this monster to make him pay.”

The cold controlled rage and hate audible in his words chilled everyone to their bones.

“Did this answer your question?” finally asked Harry to break the silence that had settled over them.

The Magis nodded.

“Yes, but couldn’t you have showed us another one, less...” The man struggled with his words under Harry’s glare.

“This one was the most complete one. I could have shown you another, but it wouldn’t have had all the information and you would have had to watch several of them. Moreover you saw what would happen should Voldemort win. If he got wind of your existence or managed to detect your islands, you’d be as good as dead.”

“Why?” asked Doryan who seemed to have recovered from the vision. It hadn’t been the same Harry had showed him last night.

“You have powers he doesn’t and he doesn’t like possible rivals. He will either kill you or try to bend you to his will.” He looked at the Magis.

“So what will you decide?”

The older one leveled his eyes which were still a yellow shade to Harry.

“We have little choice left. Our clan will help you stop this madness. We can’t allow this ritual to be performed... the consequences...” the man shuddered.

The one on his side spoke up.

“We will send some of us in your world. But don’t expect miracles, our race dislikes humans: always had and always will. This attitude is carved too deep in our civilization to disappear in a few days. Maybe



with time, but the change will have to be bore by the youths.” He looked at Opheria.

“Like Garth too?” snapped Harry.

“Young Garth deserved what he got.” Answered a Magis who had remained silent so far.

“Do you really think his family will agree to this?” Harry’s voice was laced with sarcasm.

“They’d better.” Replied another one.

Harry nodded.

Teneb placed himself at his side, Celen having recovered from the vision and placed his hand on his shoulder, trying to bring his friend some comfort, seeing past his mask, seeing the distress that having to relieve this scene had brought him.

He smiled at his Elvish friend.

“Well we should go, they must be waiting for us to eat.”

Wordlessly, the others agreed and left the room. Opheria and Kobalt waited behind. Harry approached them.

“I think I have to apologize, I shouldn’t have let you watch this.”

Opheria looked up, her eyes, regaining their orange color, staring in his.

“We needed to see this, we needed to understand...” she said.

Harry looked at her, his face unreadable, then a small, barely noticeable smile appeared on his lips and disappeared as quickly.

“Let’s go.”

They exited the room and headed for the dining room of the castle.

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Lunch was an uncomfortable affair. Harry and the others had arrived last and had been followed by odd stares as people noticed the pale look of most of them. The ebony-haired wizard hadn't been pleased with the seating arrangement: he had been placed next to Najira and Celen. The atmosphere was so tensed that everyone was relieved when it ended.

During the whole thing, Harry had sensed several gazes on him. Once he had looked up and had stared into Demenor's eyes. The old rider had a haunted look in his eyes, but also determination. Apparently he had decided on something, but Harry didn't know what.

He was grateful to leave the room, Teneb not far behind him. The elf decided to show his friend the gardens.

Harry had been there the previous night and had enjoyed them. But in the afternoon they were even more amazing. Slowly, describing his friend some of the plants, Teneb led him to his and Celen's secret spot.

Both of them were soon sprawled in the grass, looking at the sky. It was a nice day, sunny with a soft breeze. Relaxing in silence at first, they started to talk about things like girls.... Teneb told Harry that he was attending the ball with a childhood friend of his... Djaryle's family had been Teneb's neighbors for ages and the two children had grown up together. Both of them knew their parents would have liked to betroth them, but had managed to convince them otherwise.

"And you Harry? Are you going alone?"

Harry sighed.

"I'm forced to escort Najira."

Teneb sat up at this.

"Are you mad?!"

"I didn't have much of a choice left... If I hadn't, her father would have punished her all the more."



“And she was counting on it... Harry, Najira is devious, don't trust her, not even for a moment.” His tone was worried. “I really mean it...”

Harry was frowning, about to ask what was making his friend that worried, but decided not to pry.

“Alright, I won't.”

He returned to the primary subject of their conversation.

“So do we have to wear something in particular?”

Teneb looked at him, a bit startled at the conversation's abrupt turn.

“Well, we can't wear our ceremonial clothes.”

“Then I don't know what I'm going to wear, I do not have other clothes fitting for a ball.”

Teneb looked carefully over his friend.

“I can lend you some, we're about the same build, you'll just have to shrink them a bit.”

“Thank you.”

“No need, we'll worry about it after the dinner.”

There was a small silence.

“So, Teneb, any girl in your life, besides Djaryle?” Harry asked with a playful smile.

This time, Teneb looked at his friend with wide eyes.

“Who are you and where is Harry? What have you done with him?”

Harry smirked.

“No, no, no, no Teneb, don't try to elude the question...” his smirk widened a bit.



Teneb had to refrain from smiling at Harry's playfulness, it wasn't that often that his blood brother was that relaxed and thinking about it, he assumed that it must have been because of the punishment delivered earlier in the day and of his upcoming return to his world.

"I wasn't trying to elude the question..."

The look Harry sent him was obviously saying "Sure you weren't".

"But to answer your question, no..."

"What? Teneb does not have a girlfriend? We'll have to remedy to this..."

"Well, if you can find someone who will see Teneb the elf and not Athar Teneb, future High counselor, alright... and a pretty one too."

"Tricky one aren't you... So what are you looking for in a girl."

Harry handed him a small stick he had been playing with, as if it had been a microphone.

Playing along, Teneb took it.

"Well, intelligent, with good sense of humor and comebacks. Compassionate but with a backbone. Not taller than me, nor older. A pretty appearance would be great. Someone who will see me for who I am and not what I am."

Harry laughed at this.

"You're looking for the perfect girl... Good luck to find it."

Teneb smiled.

"Do you believe in soulmates?"

Harry thought about it for a few seconds.

"I don't know... It sounds quite depressing to me to know that there is only one person for you in the whole world and if you don't find her,



even if you marry with someone else you love, you'll never be truly happy."

"I believe in it... and I have more time than you to find her... Really, with a lifespan as short as yours you must be quite... busy to ensure the next generation..."

Harry whacked his friend on the head.

"Teneb," he was blushing slightly. "We're not at it, every moment of our life!"

"Really? But then how..." Teneb dissolved into laughter upon seeing the red face of his friend.

Harry stuttered indignantly at his friend's hilarity, before crossing his arms and pouting. Suddenly, before he could react, he was pinned to the ground and tickled mercilessly.

"Teneb! Stop! Alright! You win!"

"Say it!"

"Never" said Harry between two fits of laughter. Teneb went back to tickle him.

"Al-Alright, Teneb is the greatest!"

"I didn't hear anything..."

"TENEB IS THE GREATEST!"

Teneb let go of his friend, only to find himself on the ground, tickled, Harry growling above him.

"This means war!"

Five minutes later they collapsed on the grass, out of breath.

"We're childish, aren't we?" said Harry.



"We're sixteen," replied Teneb evenly. Looking at each other they cracked up.

Once they managed to catch their breath, they laid back on the grass.

"That was good..." said Teneb, starring at the sky.

"Yes..."

"By the way, what's you're type of girl? You never answered your own question....."

Harry blushed again.

"Well, I used to have a huge crush on this girl, Cho, but her boyfriend was the one killed last year, so now I don't really know... My life expectancy was never predicted to be very long."

"Surely you must have a dream girl, or how would you have wet dreams?"

Harry was now tomato red, and Teneb was enjoying every moment of it... He had never seen his friend, normally so composed that embarrassed. Good to know he was still a normal sixteen teenager.

"Well, I'd like her to be fun to be around, honest, clever, witty, a girl who stands her ground and likes to joke. A little shorter than me, pretty... And like you, someone who would like me for who I truly am, not for the hero's picture...oh and not a blond! Not my type!"

Teneb grinned at the last comment and looked like he bit back a retort. Instead he smiled.

"Seem like we're both going to have troubles finding our perfect girl..." he said.

"Yeah..."

At this moment, a ginger blur hit Harry square in his chest, knocking the breath out of him.

"Lucky!"



The fox seemed quite happy with himself as he seated himself on his two-legs.

“Possessive, isn’t he?”

“Seem so,” sighed Harry, trying to move, drawing a yip of protestation from the fox. Seating himself cross-legged on the grass, he placed the small animal in his lap and turned to Teneb.

“So what are we doing? Dinner is in three hours... and I don’t want to train, or ride for once.”

“Do you know how to swim? There’s a small lake near...”

“Well, not very well... I never really learned.”

“Time to remedy to this!, come on!”

Teneb stood up immediately, and dragged Harry to his feet, much to Lucky’s displeasure. The fox trotted alongside the two youths as they headed for the lake, talking animatedly, worries forgotten for now, and for once, acting like they should always had. Like teenagers.

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They spent their afternoon at the lake, Teneb showing Harry how to swim, without a lot of success. Harry felt extremely awkward as he tried to imitate the swift movements of his friend.

“That’s it, Harry, you’re doing great. Keep your legs moving, and your arms: right, left, right, left.”

Teneb was currently trying to teach him the crawl, but the dark-haired wizard felt ridicule, splashing around. As he thought about it, he lost his breath and inspired at the wrong moment. Coughing, he tried to keep himself at the surface to no avail. Feeling himself drown, he was quite annoyed... This was the fourth time!

He felt a bubble of air form around his head and strong arms dragging him back to the surface.



Teneb helped him reached the side of the lake where they had left their clothes.

"I think I had enough swimming for a long moment..." he said, disgruntled at his failure.

Teneb hid a grin.

"Well you know what they say, fire and water don't mix!" retorted Teneb.

A disgusted snort answered him.

Both of them were now laying on the grass, bathed in the warm sun light.

"This is heaven," sighed Harry, closing his eyes in contentment.

"Yes... No worries, no problems, the sun, nothing to do..."

They stayed in silence for a few more minutes. Harry let himself relax and drift to sleep, after setting up a ward to wake him should anyone come, and an alarm to have him up in time for dinner.

He was startled awake two hours later by the shrill alarm. Teneb had woken up too. Cursing lightly at the sound, Harry stopped it with a wave of his hand. Stretching a bit, he sat up.

"Well, we should go... Or they'll wonder what happened to us."

The Elvish rider nodded and started to gather his things back. Lucky was gone once again and after checking through the small collar he had placed on the fox to be sure he was alright, Harry followed his friend's example.

Soon, they were walking back to the castle, fully relaxed.

They headed for the dining room. Once there, they sat, being the first ones to be there. This time, Harry was careful place himself so that Najira wouldn't be able to sit near him. It wasn't that he disliked her a lot, he could sympathize with her predicament, but wouldn't submit to



her father for her sake. Finally he found himself between Teneb and Kobalt. His appetite was better after their afternoon.

“Where were you both?” asked the Elemental.

“At some lake near here.”

Kobalt nodded, not prying deeper. The purple-haired rider was quite wary around the young wizard, not really knowing how to act.

Harry took pity on him.

“And you?”

“I was with Polath. We talked, a lot.”

Harry was silent. He envied the elemental a little. Rexeran was an Elder, they would never be able to be always together, they each had their duty to perform.

“Apparently Polath isn’t going to sever our bond, not at least until my training is finished.”

Harry shook his head absent-mindedly.

“Good for you...”

Kobalt seemed to sense his distraction and remained quiet.

“Are you coming tonight?” finally asked Harry, exiting of his day-dreaming.

“Yes, Opheria accepted to come with me.”

They fell in an uncomfortable silence.

Harry was eyeing the Elemental. He hadn’t been the worse one of the lot. All he had ever done was ignoring him. And if his proposition of being his second had been motivated by guilt, Harry was sure his power and status had played a role in this reaction. Today he had been, a little surprised at his behavior and now he didn’t know how to act around the Elemental, nor the Magis girl. They had not had any



obligation towards him. They had not directly been part of the whole ostracizing thing, but had not actively sought to harm him. He was undecided towards them, part of him was indifferent, another small part wanted to give them a second chance... a very small part, but nonetheless present. He sighed, well he would be civil with them and would see what their true motives were. He focused back on his plate. The food was good and he wasn't going to let it go to waste.

It was quickly over and the women left as soon as possible, having to get themselves ready.

Najira approached Harry.

"Athar, I'll be waiting for you in the entrance hall. I'll be wearing a lavender gown."

Harry nodded, his face blank.

Kobalt whistled

"You're going with her?"

The blank face and green eyes turned to him.

"Not by my choice," replied coldly the young man before him.

At this moment, Teneb for him to follow him out.

"Come on, you need to chose a robe for tonight."

Nodding, Harry stood up and after a curt salute to Kobalt and Opheria, a small smile to Doryan, Valera and even Celen, he left, led through the castle by his friend. After many turns, they ended in a bedroom.

"When I come to the castle, I usually sleep here," explained Teneb. He opened a cupboard and started rummaging through it, taking pieces of material out from time to time.

"Here," he finally said, that's all the outfits which are proper for this type of ball. What color did she said she would wearing?"

"Lavender."



“Alright, then, forget about red, orange, yellow or any colors close to them. He placed a few clothes aside as he said it. “Green... would have been great on you, but he won’t really go well with her dress... Blue is a possibility, but I don’t know what shade of lavender she’ll wear...Purple could do the trick too...” He looked up at his friend.

Harry was gawking at him, gathering his wit, he spoke.

“Since when did you transform into a fashion designer?”

Teneb shrugged.

“I told you appearance were important here. Even the color you wear can mean a lot of thing. For example, I’ll wear blue and silver tonight, they’re my family’s color. If I wanted to wear another one, I’d have to be careful not to wear two colors corresponding to another family, or else it could mean I was planning to ally myself to them... Every child of noble families learn early the meaning of the colors.”

“Great...”

“Now, back to you. Bronze would go well with lavender, but it’s one of the main colors of the King’s family so it would look suspicious if you were to wear them.”

Harry’s head was about to burst. The people who had invented these rules must have been twisted. So much thinking for an outfit!

“I think you should keep yourself to the neutral colors... It’s a bit depressing, but at least you’ll be safe from assumptions.”

“If you say so...”

“Well, this one will do the trick. The silver won’t be too suspicious as you’re close to my family.”

Teneb was holding a black material, unwrapping it.

It was a long dress robe in a inky silky color, silver threads were sewed on it, spiraling, running up and down the outfit, it was slit on the front from his waist down. A diagonal line of silver buttons from



the left side of the high collar to just under his left arm was closing it.  
High collar!

“Teneb, am I forced to wear a high collar? I hate those things!”

A smirk appeared on the elf's face.

“Are you married? Engaged? Betrothed?”

Harry shook his head hurriedly.

“Then you have to wear that... thing, it's showing that you're “free” to parents with daughter of age.”

“Great... Let me tell you, the ones who thought of this were sick...Anything symbol I should know of?”

“Well, no... the hair could, but not everyone is following this symbolism... It's a relatively new trend, so it won't really matter.”

“Good. One less thing to worry about.”

“Alright, so are you going to try it?”

With a sigh, Harry put the robe over his black pants. It was a bit too long so with a wave of his hand, he shrank it to fit him perfectly. The material was soft, and for once the high collar was bearable as it was made in something more supple than his Athar's robes. Looking in a mirror, he liked the look. It was Dark, nearly all black, he changed his pants color to gray. Yes it would be better like this. The threads were not always visible, shining in the light. He placed the torque above the outfit, but kept the medallion against his skin, under the robe. He quickly tied his hair, some upper strands threaded together. Not braided. Harry was set on never braiding his hair, first because every elf was doing it, then because he thought it was girly.

Teneb nodded in approval. His friend was impressive like this, like a Dark Angel, he mused. He himself changed in his own robes. They were a dark blue and silver, the same cut as Harry. He braided some of his hair, albeit a little more complicatedly than usual. He saw Harry motion to strap his sword on his side.



“Harry, no swords are allowed in the ballroom.”

“What!”

“It’s the rule,” he replied, shrugging.

The dark-haired frowned.

“Alright, but I’m taking a few knives and my dagger.”

Teneb didn’t answer knowing already he was going to do the same. His last months with Harry and their two guardians had carved one thing in his mind: “Constant vigilance!” Harry’s guardian had been obsessed with this rule and would attack them randomly, until they could react in a heart beat to a threat. This meant too that both of them had developed a light paranoia, deeper in Harry’s case as he had had his guardian on his back for a longer time.

They were ready soon enough.

“We have about forty minutes left,” said Teneb. “If you don’t mind, I’ll go see Djaryle, I haven’t had the time to talk with her for a long time.”

Harry looked at his friend with a sly smile.

“Go ahead I’ll go to the gardens, but don’t do anything I wouldn’t!”

Blushing, Teneb escaped swiftly, not leaving time to Harry to tease him more.

Grinning, Harry left the room, closing it and locking it, not wanting someone to go in and meddled with their things. He headed for the garden. The scenery was peaceful: It was dusk and the sun was slowly going down, illuminating the sky with colors. Harry leaned on a tree, his eyes engrossed with the sight. Suddenly his magical senses perked up. Something was going on. There was a huge gathering of magic nearby. He strode to the place, not liking the fact that someone was playing with so much power so close to other people. He was so concentrated on this surge that he bumped strongly with someone. Cursing, he looked up to see Celen’s panicked face.



“Harry! You have to help me!” The prince was nearly in hysterics.

“What?! Calm down!” barked Harry.

“It’s Demenor! He’s gone mad!”

“What are you saying?!” Harry raised his voice, trying to calm the prince enough to have him give a comprehensible explanation.

“He’s performing the Al’ethora!”

Harry’s blood froze as he heard this and cold fury invaded him. No! It would not end like this!

“Where?” His voice was restrained as he tried not to invade the prince’s mind for the information.

“There!” Celen pointed in the direction of the power surge he had sensed a bit later.

“Show me.”

Taking his sleeve, Celen dragged him to a small open space in the gardens. In the middle, was standing Demenor, wearing only his pants, signs painted on his skin, muttering the old chant of the Al’ethora, the ritual suicide. This practice was respected among the elves and nearly sacred. It was performed as a way for an elf to regain his honor. Demenor had his dagger raised. Harry noticed he already cut himself to paint his skin. He shuddered, it was too close to Voldemort’s rituals even if it was his own blood. He wouldn’t let him go like this, it was too easy to abandon!

He stepped in the open space and with his hand banished the dagger away. Demenor looked up, startled, and even slightly angry. But Harry didn’t care, he didn’t want another death on his hands. In old language, he spoke up.

This was one of the few ways there was to break the Al’ethora. He had read it while copying books in Nerthor’s classes.



“Ijri, Athar Harry Potter, arlie Thorans hos myrn desa ijrín. Ijri arlin humelys athia’yr Demenor hos ilkanes. Otha inrin litht una galdat vandhornes yorn desen’it. . Ijri reslin mith’ij kenda athia’it aes irta ory belian’it caelces. Syaie athia’it ilkanes.” (I, Athar Harry Potter, ask the Powers to listen to me. I humbly request for Demenor’s life to be spared. A debt links us and must be repaid before his death. I invoke my right over his life as the one wronged by his acts. May his life be spared.)

A glow surrounded him as he spoke the last words, hoping it would work, or the consequences wouldn’t be nice. Interrupting the Al’ethora was punished heavily. But thankfully, he sensed the approval of the power around him and slowly the signs faded from Demenor’s skin as Harry wobbled on his feet, the after effects of the rush of adrenalin being a bit too much for him to stay still.

Celen rushed to Demenor, checking him to see if he was alright. A cold rage filled Harry as he looked at the man which should have been his mentor. He stilled himself as Celen stepped aside, his empathic abilities sensing his anger and knowing better than to interfere. Demenor was his godfather and had always looked after him, even when he was busy with riders. But this time he needed to be brought to reality

“What in the Powers’ name were you thinking?!” he whispered.

Demenor looked right in his eyes, anger visible in his eyes.

“I was regaining my honor.” He answered evenly. “And I didn’t do anything you didn’t try yourself.”

Harry nearly exploded at this. Balling his hands, he gritted his teeth, chopping the rider’s head wouldn’t be a good idea... Teneb would not appreciate to have his robes return with a new color.

Hearing a gasp, he turned his head a little to see Celen gaping at him, he returned his attention to the riders’ leader. The sight could have been amusing, a sixteen year old about to berate a hundreds year old elf, but Harry wasn’t seeing the humor of this situation.



“You know nothing of me, you have no right to say that. You never tried to learn more about me, so don’t even assume to understand me. I tried to kill myself, that’s true, and you and your peers were partly responsible for this, along with my visions. But I didn’t do it because I was too scared to face the consequences of my mistakes!” Harry’s voice was biting.

“Instead of trying to correct the situation, you’re taking the easy way out! You’re acting like a coward. Yes, kill yourself, go on, I won’t try to stop you again, redeem your honor if being a coward can do it!”

The tone of his voice was raised.

“Did you even think about the consequences of your act, or were you selfish in addition of a coward?”

He sneered at the shaken old man in front of him. The elf’s eyes were wide, as if he was starting to realize something.

“You didn’t, did you? Now hear me, do whatever you want, I’m washing my hands of it, but remember this: if you end your life, because of the current situation I caused by my unwilling presence, you’ll answer me, be it in this world or the other. I don’t want another death on my hands, I have enough to deal with as it is.” By this time, his voice was deadly. He whirled on his heel, leaving the elf behind. He stopped near Celen.

“I’m sorry, but is there a part of the garden you won’t miss? I can’t go in the ballroom that angered or there’ll probably be an accident if I’m pushed over the edge.”

Celen nodded and pointed to an ugly plant on their right.

The gardeners had tried with little success to get rid of it as it was asphyxiating the plants nearby. The plant was being restrained from spreading around but was a real thorn in their side.

Harry nodded, muttering thanks and suddenly huge flames erupted at the place where the plant had been. It flared for a few minutes and Celen found himself transfixed by the colors dancing in it. It then disappeared as quickly as it had come. Glancing at the human, he



noticed that he was much calmer. He was a fire gifted, he reminded himself, if his powers were active and strong, they were influencing his reactions, something which was hard to believe, given the huge control Harry had over himself.

"I hope you didn't like this plant because it won't grow back," stated Harry.

"Don't worry about that, the gardeners' will probably bless you..."

"That would be a first... Can you deal with him? I don't think I'd have the patience to do it, nor the desire to even want to do it."

"Yes, thank you, Harry, for stopping my godfather."

A strange emotion flickered in the dark-haired wizard's eyes.

"No problem, be sure to prevent himself to do something that foolish again, because this time I wouldn't stop him."

Celen nodded to the Athar as he left, before turning to his godfather.

"He was right, you know."

Demenor just looked at him, dazed. Sighing, Celen took off his cloak and handed it to the elf who draped himself in it. He then proceeded in bringing him back to the castle, informing him that should he want to try something like this, Celen would have him bound to his bed and perhaps drugged until he came back to his senses.

--

Harry walked through the gardens to calm down.

*Harry?*

*Teneb? Is there a problem?*

*No, but I could return the question. What were you doing? You were so angry that I was a bit upset myself...*

*Demenor was doing the Al'ethora.*



*He was... WHAT?!*

*My reaction exactly...*

*But what possessed him?.... Did you manage to stop him?*

*Yes, but if he tries again, I won't. I also told him a few things.*

*I don't want to know...*

*Celen was here too, he was the one to tell me what Demenor was doing. I had sensed a power surge, but wasn't thinking of something like this... We bumped in each other and he asked me to help, he was nearly hysterical...*

*What did you burn?*

*Oh, a plant Celen said I could... quite a resilient thing. Harry sent a mental picture of the plant to his blood brother.*

*The gardeners will be happy to be rid of this horror.*

*That's what Celen told me.*

*Well, you still have twenty minutes to calm down...*

*Yes, I'll meet you in the entrance?*

*What, scared of Najira? Amusement was audible in the mental tone of Teneb.*

*No, but...*

*I'll be there. A mental chuckle was heard and had Harry huffing.*

*Thank you..., he said a bit peeved at his friend's amusement.*

*See you there.*

For the next fifteen minutes, Harry walked down the paths in the garden, admiring the plants in the decreasing light of the evening.



Fairy lights popped out, illuminating the paths. With a sigh he finally headed back to the castle, straightening his robes on his way.

Taking a big breath, he walked to the entrance hall. He immediately spotted Najira. She was stunning he had to admit it, and he wasn't the only thinking so, since most of the male eyes were on her. He noticed Teneb on the other side of the hall and walked to him, he was talking with a girl, dressed in a bronze and blue dress, with dark brown hair.

"Teneb, thank you for coming," he said as he approached them. The girl turned to face him, her eyes eyeing him, appraising him.

She turned to her friend.

"You didn't tell me, he was quite good looking too!"

Teneb gave her a strange look.

"I can't really tell, I don't swing that way, Djaryle. Harry, may I present you Djaryle, Djaryle, this is Harry."

The girl turned her eyes to him, and intense blue orbs pierced him. She smiled as she extended her hand to him.

"Happy to meet you."

Tentatively, Harry took her hand and on the spur of the moment, kissed it.

"A Gentleman... you should take example on your friend, Teneb." She said, smirking at him.

"Well, Djaryle, you'd have to be a true lady for me to do this..."

"Touché."

Harry was looking back and forth between them, confused by the acceptance he was now subjected to.

"Sorry, to ask that, hmm Djaryle, but why...?"



“Why am I not treating you like scum?”

“Yes.”

“Simple, Teneb’s friends are my friends and another fact is that two of my ancestors left our world for yours, since then my family had always been looked upon as slightly crazy... We have always said that the rift between humans and us had to be closed. Moreover I have a feeling about you, call it intuition, sixth sense or whatever you want.”

“Why?”

“The Sight is powerful in my line.”

Harry nodded, a bit overwhelmed by the girl’s attitude. It was a nice change, but really unexpected.

“Well, thank you, Djaryle, I can understand why Teneb befriended you... It’s an honor to meet someone with brains for once.” He bowed his head to her. Turning to Teneb, he noticed the large grin on his face. “I have to go meet Najira... But could you come to my rescue, later on?”

“No problem, Harry,” said Teneb, clamping his hand over his friend’s mouth. “Good luck and be careful.”

“Don’t worry... See you soon.”

Strengthening his shields, Harry walked to the half Veela, feeling her power hit his shields, like waves. She wasn’t doing it on purpose he decided. The power wasn’t focused or directed precisely.

“Najira.” He acknowledged her with a small tilt of his head.

“Athar,” she curtsied swiftly.

Stiffly, Harry held out his arm. She placed her hand delicately on his and they walked through the hall, heading towards the ball room. Stopping before the door, a herald looked at them. He had heard of the human Athar but had not seen him yet. He looked carefully at him.



The young Athar didn't seem to enjoy the presence of the half Veela he noted, but given the circumstances, he wouldn't have either. He looked in his eyes and barely repressed a shudder, this youth was dangerous. The herald had always prided himself in being able to assess the soul of others. This young man had a divided soul: dragon soul, but also leopard soul. A dangerous mix... for a dangerous person. He nodded at him, seeing the surprise this small gesture provoked. He smiled inwardly at this. He was a herald, he didn't judge. His job had made him meet a lot of people, hear a lot of stories and had left him with a strange view of the world many in his profession shared, though they wouldn't say it out loud. He had seen too much in his life to judge on appearance. These nobles, gathered in this room could pride themselves with their honor, but he himself thought commoners to have more honor than these power-hungry people, expect for a few... He smiled at Teneb and Djaryle who were standing behind the human. Teneb had turned out well, and Djaryle, despite all the things that were told on her family was honorable. He saw the human tilt his head to him in response, his eyes gleaming strangely. Their color was unnerving and the herald remembered having seen such eyes before in his travels.

He opened the door, announcing the pairs in front of him.

"Athar Harry and Lady Najira, Athar Teneb and Lady Djaryle."

Some whispers followed their entrance. Head held high, eyes frozen into twin emerald, Harry walked through the room, guiding Najira to one of the side of the room; Teneb and Djaryle behind them. He walked her to a seat and sat her, standing at her side, as Teneb did the same for Djaryle. Arxeren had been adamant about teaching him the Elvish etiquette as well as the basics of dancing, something Harry hadn't liked a lot but was now grateful for.

See, I told you so!

Good evening to you too.

So, how are you?

There was concern in Arxeren's voice laced with weariness.



A little tired, but good so far.

You haven't fried anything ?

Well, does a plant count for something...

A plant?

It was this plant or Demenor...

What did he do... Arxere's tone was weary.

He tried to off himself by doing the Al'ethora

There was a small silence.

You should have fried him, it would have put his ideas back in place.

Harry suppressed a chuckle at the annoyance perceptible in Arxeren's voice.

How are you Arxeren?

If I find the one responsible for these blocks I'll shred him to tiny, itsy bits. Whoever it was, he did his job well...

That wasn't what I asked... Did you rest at all?

This isn't really the moment for a rest. I just wanted to check up on you.

Thanks. But you should go and rest... You've been going at it for two days straight! And I know for a fact that even spirits need to replenish their energy. So go before I have an unconscious guardian on my mind!

Are you sure? I don't like the idea of leaving you now... not with people like this...

I'll be careful, and you won't be able to help me much if you're completely exhausted!



Arxeren was silent for a moment.

Alright, I'll go, I should need about three hours... Be on your guard Harry, I have a bad feeling...

I will be, now go, shoo!

Arxeren left, grumbling about impertinent whelps, a remark which had Harry smiling.

He reported his attention on the people around. Kobalt and Opheria had arrived too, they were standing on his right, Teneb and Djaryle were on his left and Celen and a quite pretty girl were on Teneb's left.

The King and the Queen entered last and went to sit on the stage on the two chairs placed there.

Standing up, Enrys looked around, his eyes hardening as he looked at his daughter.

"May the ball begin. Would the Prince and the Athars open the first dance?"

Harry had little choice left. Extending his arm to Najira, he led her to the dance floor and positioned himself, his left hand on her waist, the other holding her hand. As a waltz echoed in the room, he mentally thanked his guardian for the dancing lessons. The three couple of dancers whirled, twirled on the dance floor for the two or three minutes of music. Najira was an excellent dancer, swift, light, precise in her movements. As it ended, he bowed to her as she curtsied. Another music sprang up, for an Elvish dance called a falan. It wasn't too complicated: two lines of dancers which repeated the same steps two times on their right, then on their left, changing of partner at each rotation. Harry noticed that Teneb, Kobalt had placed themselves so that Harry would have Djaryle and Opheria as partner for the two other rotations. He was thankful for this as he didn't fancy dancing with a random Elfish or Magis or Elemental girl, thank you very much, but no thanks. As the introduction ended, he started on the first steps.

Harry danced a few more times, but took the opportunity to sit as an elf came to invite Najira. Excusing himself, he went to a table and



took a bit of punch, or of something which looked like punch. Checking it before drinking, he gulped it down, once he was sure there was no problem, not taking any chance. It tasted a lot like what he had drunk last night after the allegiances.

“Harry?”

He turned and saw Djaryle and Teneb standing in front of him.

“Yes?”

“Could you take her to the dance floor for a few dances, she’s killing me?” pleaded Teneb, but his grin was betraying him.

Djaryle glared at him.

“Poor little fragile thing... Come on Harry I need a dancing partner!”

Without giving him time to protest, she dragged him to the floor where a fast dance was starting.

“Yes, a holdary,” squeaked the girl still dragging Harry. “I hope you know how to dance it very well,” she asked, her tone making it clear that there’ll be hell to pay if he didn’t.

Harry just smirked, handing her his hand, daring her to take it.

Returning his smirk, she took it, and soon they were spinning around.

Harry smiled, if there was one Elvish dance he liked, it was this one. She was quite dangerous if you didn’t know it well... but once you got it right, it was extremely fun to do. If Harry had had to compare it to a human dance, he would have said that the closest one would have been acrobatic rock’n roll. It was a bit more dignified, but... He went back to the dance. Thanks to all his training, he was strong enough to hold up for the whole thing and Arxeren had made sure he knew every dances possible well enough. This one he hadn’t minded learning, his gymnastic had helped with his coordination, and he had conjured a dummy to practice the lifts and shots with.



Speaking of lift, he prepared for the first one, ready to catch Djaryle if something went wrong. He spun her in the air, catching her at her waist as she fell down, exactly as she should be. Swiftly, without a pause, he led her in the next sequence of steps. Finally after a few more minutes of steps, spins, lifts... they stopped, slightly out of breath.

"That's it, you're my partner for the next one!" stated Djaryle, smiling as she curtsied briefly.

Harry knew he was smiling when he bowed at her, but he had really enjoyed the dance. He had come to appreciate the exhaustion which came with physical efforts, it was comforting in a strange way. He preferred it to magical exhaustion which left him feeling slightly sick.

The next dance was a waltz, an easy dance for both Harry and Djaryle. Half way through it, Harry felt a tap on his shoulder and saw Kobalt and Opheria.

"Mind if I cut in?"

Harry shook his head and after bowing to Djaryle, he led Opheria away, a "Remember what I said" following him"

"What did she meant?"

Harry smirked slightly, his defenses a bit down after the fun he had had dancing with Djaryle.

"I have to dance the next holdary with her," he answered.

"Well, you're a good dancer, from what I've seen."

Harry's smirk widened a bit at this.

"Believe me, that wasn't always the case. My dance partner last year would have told you I was the worst dancer she had ever seen, I believe." His tone cooling down as he remembered Parvati and Hogwarts.

"Hard to conceive..."



The waltz ended and they saluted each other.

Harry walked back to the sides, looking for Teneb.

He saw him speaking with a tall Air Elemental. He shot his friend a warning glance as Harry approached them. The wizard signaled he had seen it.

"Teneb, How are you doing?"

"Fine, now that you seemed to have occupied Djaryle for awhile." The Elemental next to him coughed loudly.

"Oh, but what was I thinking, Harry, this is Ulthon, one of the King counselor." And he added mentally: *He's the Oyeras' leader.*

*I know, you're father told me about them* replied Harry quickly, tilting his head slightly at the Elemental who was eyeing him with a predatory look.

"Counselor, this is Athar Harry, as you surely heard," continued Teneb, not indicating that he had been communicating mentally.

"As did most of the court," replied the Elemental, tilting his head back. "Someone as powerful as the Athar can't remain unknown for long."

Harry nearly gagged at the flattering.

"Athar, what are you planning to do before your second year of training. Your presence here could lead to numerous changes for the best of our worlds, I'm sure. As I'm sure people here would help you should you decide to do so..."

The proposition was implicit, but evident, at least for any half witted person.

Harry raised his eyebrow at him.

"I take it that you weren't informed of my plans... I'll leave your world, hopefully for good tonight, to go back to mine and fight at my people's side, to ensure that I'll still have a home world..."



He smirked at the confused expression on Ulthon's face.

"It's been a pleasure talking to you, but..." he heard the beginning of a new holdary and thanked whatever deity was providing him an exit, "I promised this dance to Djaryle." He nodded to Teneb who smiled at him.

At this moment, an annoyed Djaryle arrived and dragged him to the dance floor, barely stopping to salute the counselor.

"Come on, you said I could have this one."

Harry settled into position and tried to put up an innocent face.

"I didn't say anything, you demanded."

She was about to protest when he spun her in the first steps of the dance.

Minutes later they strode to the refreshment table. Both taking something to drink.

"That was fun..." said Djaryle.

"I drink to this," replied Harry, raising his glass.

Teneb joined them a few seconds later.

"You did great with Ulthon,"

"I have to thank Djaryle for it," Harry bowed to the girl who looked at them bewildered.

Harry couldn't understand how he could be so relaxed with her, after all she was an Elf. But she had welcomed him as she would have welcomed anybody, not taking his race or title into account. For Djaryle he had been Teneb's friend first and foremost. And it was refreshing. Harry now realized how he had yearned for this kind of acceptance. Teneb was his blood brother but even he at first had not accepted him like this. Not that he would hold it against him, but if



everyone could have been like Djaryle it would have made everything easier.

Celen approached them, apparently his partner was dancing with someone else for now.

“Djaryle, Harry,” he saluted them.

Harry noticed that Celen hadn’t used his title. He hoped it meant that the prince was starting to accept him... He knew how important Celen was to Teneb and didn’t want to put a strain on their friendship.

“So Harry? How does it feel to be Djaryle’s victim... err partner,” Teneb corrected after earning himself a whack on the head from said girl, “for a dance?”

Harry glanced sideways at Djaryle who was shooting him a warning glance.

“Well, it’s... fun,” he answered a bit lamely, “but tiring...” he added with an amused sparkle in the eyes. Djaryle didn’t seem to know if she should take it as a compliment or an insult.

“ And she’s a good dancer.” Harry added.

“See Teneb! At least your friend have taste...” she said looking triumphantly at her childhood friend.

“If he likes to have his shoulder dislocated...”

“I said he had taste, not that he was sane...” shot back the girl.

“Oh! I see how it is... See if I ever compliment you again...” said Harry, crossing his arms, a mock-hurt expression on his face, relaxing a bit more.

The others snickered at him which only had him huffing indignantly.

“Alright, I know when I’m not welcome.”

This only had them chuckling more.



At this moment, Harry heard someone coming to them. He recognized Najira's hair as she came closer, through the crowd. Immediately, his face stilled in a blank mask. The change so swift that it left the others quite surprised. Teneb had seen the girl so wasn't that bewildered. He knew that Harry couldn't afford to open up with her. It was already a small miracle he had been able to relax that much with Celen and Djaryle.

"Athar?"

He turned to her, face blank.

"Yes?"

"Could I have this dance?"

Wordlessly, Harry nodded and led her to the dance floor.

Djaryle turned to Teneb once they were out of hearing range.

"What was this about?"

"Dja, you have to understand Harry's situation. He doesn't trust most of us. I'm surprised he relaxed that much in yours and Celen's presence. He has been forced to build himself a mask which hides everything that could be use against him: his emotions, his weakness. He created the mask of a cold fighter, the Athar: it was his protection, his shield. What you saw before was a glimpse of the "true Harry", if you can put it this way."

*Hearing you, I have some type of schizophrenia complex...* came the dry retort of Harry.

*You know I don't mean it like this, I understand the value of masks...*

"So that's what you were talking about this morning..." said Celen.

"Yes,"

He saw Najira and Harry dancing.

"Najira is up to something," he said.



“When isn’t she?” replied Celen, “Father had her completely under his control.”

Djaryle looked at the couple.

“Something is going to happen soon...” her voice trailed off, “the Dragon will...” she shook her head, her eyes losing their far away look. “What did I say?”

Teneb knew of the Seer blood in her family, Djaryle had inherited it to a lesser degree. She had a sort of sixth sense and he had learned to trust it.

“That something involving Harry and Najira would happen, and something about a Dragon.”

At this moment, Najira and Harry parted. Harry went back to them as the half Veela headed for the gardens.

“Good time?” he asked as Harry sat back near him.

“Not really, she was extremely tensed and she kept glancing at the King. I don’t know what he expects her to do. She can’t use her powers on me, not unless I drop my shields, something I’m not about to do with her... So what does he want?”

Celen looked at him strangely.

“What did she tell you?”

“That your father,” Harry spat the word, “wanted her to seduce me and have me under her control for him.”

Celen snorted at this.

“This sounds like something my father would do, but he must have something else planned. He must be using Najira as a distraction to do something else.”

Harry sent him a strange look.

“Why are you telling me this?” he asked his face guarded.



“Because, I don’t agree with my father on this... I’m not sure how I feel about humans in general, but, you’re Teneb’s friend, Blood brother if I’m not mistaken, even if he didn’t tell me,” he cast a fond glance at his friend. “I admit I’ve been judging you so far, with the help of my empath’s abilities, but you have proved to be someone loyal and honoring his words, someone I could learn to be friend with.” He extended his hand to the ebony-haired youth.

Harry stared in his hazel eyes, piercing his soul, looking for treachery or lie. He saw an honest desire to put the past aside. What was he to do? Did he dare to trust him? Would he hold an individual for the faults of others like the riders had done? This thought decided him, he would not act like them. Never!

He took the offered in a strong handshake and even gave the prince a small smile. Celen smiled back. Harry allowed his guard down a little more.

“As for my father, well, as Doryan told me, Teneb, he should know best than interfering with the riders’ laws. He knew the consequences of doing so.”

Harry looked gravely at the elf.

“Celen, answer me honestly. If he was to break the riders’ rules by interfering and that I ask for reparation, what would you do.”

“If he can stoop that low, then he’d not be my father anymore. I’d always love the person my father was and mourn its disappearance, but I wouldn’t regret the person he would have become if he was to do this.”

Harry nodded, satisfied with the answer.

“You’ll make a great King, Celen. Maybe there is hope for the future, then.”

Celen smiled brightly at him, apparently happy at the compliment. If someone had told him three days ago that he would welcome the compliment of a human, he would have had them checked by a healer. But so much had happened in two days. It had gone so fast...



His mind had been turned upside down, his believes trashed around, but in the end, he realized it had made him better and stronger. It had made him think for himself. He had chosen his side, and he didn't think he was going to regret it.

"By the way, Celen, what did you do to Demenor."

"Well, I brought him to his room. Your little speech must have hit some sensitive points because you had him seething about proving you that 'he wasn't a coward' among many things."

Harry smirked.

"That was the point... But he really had me angry..."

Teneb snorted.

"No kidding, you nearly had me snapping at Djaryle."

The girl chose this moment to cut in.

"So that's why you got that annoyed for a comment on the weather?"

Celan and Teneb coughed loudly as Teneb put up an annoyed face. The four of them kept talking for awhile, dancing occasionally. Then Harry noticed the King coming from the gardens, a bit disheveled. Looking around for Najira, he didn't manage to spot her.

"Teneb have you seen Najira?" He asked.

"No why? Don't tell me you miss her?"

"Not at all, but I've just seen her father come from the gardens looking quite disheveled."

"Do you think he did something to her?"

"It won't hurt me to go and have a look."

"I'm coming with you."

"No, I'll be alright... Enjoy yourself, I'll be back in a heart beat."



Nodding a bit reluctantly, Teneb watched as his friend left the room, before turning to Djaryle.

“Want to dance?”

The girl nodded and both of them headed for the floor.

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Well, This is all for now. I hope you enjoyed it.

Next chapter will be up in a few weeks.

Thanks again for all your reviews!

Naia



## Chapter Twenty

Harry stepped out, enjoying the fresh air of this summer night.

He looked around and saw nothing. He decided to do it the fast way and quickly scanned the gardens for Najira's aura. He had had a look at it to evaluate her powers before and he could tell that they were strong but wild. He spotted it quite far from where he was, an about seven-eight minutes walk, but there was a strange thing about it. Shrugging he decided to go and see to be sure she was alright before going back in.

He quickly walked towards her aura. He froze as he saw her.

She was laying, apparently unconscious. He hurried to her side. As little as he liked her, he didn't wish any harm on her. She had a bad wound on her head, but nothing really serious, that and a broken arm apparently. Her lips were split open and her cheeks were bruised. Apparently someone had been beating her and had gone a little too far as her head seemed to have hit something really hard. Looking around Harry spotted a big fountain, which had to be the thing the girl had hit. What should he do? He couldn't leave her; it would be breaking the oath he had taken last night. He didn't know if she was an innocent, but he wasn't going to chance it. He couldn't ask for help. He would immediately be suspected of being the one responsible for this. He could ask Teneb to come and heal her, but it would take him a few minutes to come and though the other injuries weren't too serious, the head injury was worsening as time passed, if he waited more it would be soon out of his abilities and out of Teneb's so that would mean they'd have to ask an healer and Harry would most likely be accused of the whole thing.

He had no choice... He had to heal her herself, or at least stabilize her enough for Teneb to come and finish the healing. He really hoped she was unconscious... because he didn't want to lower his shields if she was conscious; it didn't want to take that much of a risk. He did a few tests to see if she was conscious but she didn't responded. A little relieved, but still filled with a feeling of dread, he dropped his barriers and fell into a healing trance. He first healed the arm: the break was clean, he just had to mend the bone, then the lips and



bruised cheeks who were easy to do too. He concentrated then on the head's wound. The shock had cut the skin open but not too deep, thankfully but the shock had apparently broke a small vessel that had created a gathering of blood which was putting pressure on the brain. This type of healing was at the limits of Harry's abilities. He could reduce pain a bit, suppress headaches, heal clean bones' breaks, bruises, cuts, scratches if they weren't too deep. He could mend a cut vessel if the hole in them was small and simple and if it was a small vessel without too much blood pressure in it. Luckily for her, the vessel was small, the cut neat and easy to mend. He started to drain the blood relieving the brain of its pressure. He was nearly done when he felt her regain consciousness. Immediately he started to withdraw from her body. Eager to rebuild his shields before she recovered all her faculties. He was barely out of his trance and willing his shields up that he felt a surge of power directed at him. He tried to hurry his shields up, but when the power hit him, his shields weren't completely secured and broke down under the pressure. Feeling it head straight to his own center, he sent a desperate plea to Teneb, having understood but too late what had happened.

*TENE!*... *HEL...*

He couldn't say more as the wave of raw power hit him. He fell on his knees, trying to fight it, but it was too much, too fast. He looked up and starred in the now violet eyes of Najira who was looking at him with a satisfied smile, fighting his last desperate attempts to stop what was about to happen. She crushed them and secured her hold on his mind; soon a glazed adoring look appeared on Harry's face, dulling his green eyes.

Najira checked that he was now firmly under his control before turning to him and smiling brightly at him, knowing the power of her smile on men she had under her control. She wasn't proven wrong as the human's face spread in a wide smile. She parted her cherry lips showing her white teeth.

"Kiss me," she simply said. She knew he couldn't resist her know. She had him under her powers, he was hers! She smiled inwardly. She would obey her father, then he would do what he had promised. But the fact that the human was quite good looking had helped... But



now she wanted him for herself, Veelas didn't like to share. His power was addictive, a maddening scent which was cloaking him. She was drawn to it, wanting to feel it, to taste it. She raised her hands to his chest and started to caress it in a way she knew drove men crazy. The human moaned under her touch. Yes, he was hers, hers only.

Her servant

Hers to play with

Hers to use

Hers.

--

Teneb had been talking with Djaryle and Celen when a mental scream nearly tore his mind.

*TENEB!... HEL...*

He recognized Harry's voice. His friend was completely panicked, desperate, then nothing. He couldn't sense him anymore, something was blocking their connection.

A feeling of dread started to fill him as he stumbled on his feet, his head in his hands.

"Teneb?"

"Are you alright?"

His two friends were looking at him, concerned. Through the veil of his raising panic, he tried to think.

"Harry... danger... gardens... can't sense him anymore..." he managed to choke. His mind still hurting from the mental scream. Luckily it had been directed through their bond and not randomly or he was sure any people with telepathic abilities would have hear it.

Celen placed his hands on his temple and Teneb felt his pain dull.



He straightened up.

“Harry is in danger,” he said then strode out the room, in the gardens.

Once outside, he tried to locate Harry’s aura to no avail, it was also blocked. Celen couldn’t find it either and Djaryle didn’t even know the basics of aura’s searching. Like every girls she was sent to the Doijas for her education but like all the nobles was allowed out for events like this one. And their education was more oriented towards healing, potions, mind magic, than magical theory, or fighting, except if the girl was showing great aptitudes at it, something Djaryle didn’t.

Desperately, Teneb racked his mind for a link with Harry that could lead them to him.

“What are you doing?”

Kobalt’s and Opheria’s voice cut through the silence, both of them having followed them out.

“Harry is in danger,” said Teneb, “And I can’t find him!!” His voice held a nearly hysterical edge at his failure to find his blood brother.

“Did you try the Athar mark?”

Hope flaring he concentrated on his own mark, making it appear on his temple and willed it to find its twin. He sensed a faint thread linking them, but it was much too thin for him to follow.

“There’s a link, but it’s too faint for me to follow...” Desperation started to fill him at his helplessness. He never should have let Harry go alone.

Opheria starred at him.

“Link me to you and show it to me. I’m a Magis, we are Magic’s children, there’s no magical connection I can’t follow.”

Nodding, Teneb motioned to her to relax. He fell in a light trance and sent his mind in hers, then drawing her to his. Once he was sure their



link was strong enough, he concentrated back on the Athar mark. Once again he felt the faint connection. It was weakening.

He sensed Opheria was done after a few seconds. He got them out of the trance as quick as possible.

“So?” he asked hurriedly.

“This way,” said the Magis girl, “but we have to hurry, someone has touched his magic.”

“Najira,” whispered Teneb, in a deadly murmur. “Lead the way, Opheria and hurry, she can’t mark him.”

Nodding Opheria started to run full speed towards the eastern part of the gardens.

They followed her, dreading what they might find.

After two minutes of running full speed, they erupted in an open place, and Teneb saw Najira, sitting on Harry, straddling his hips. He was laying on his back an idiotic smile on his lips, and a glazed look in his eyes. His blood ran cold as he saw that the girl had unbuttoned the upper part of his robe, uncovering his friend’s torso, which she was currently caressing, her hands gliding lower and lower, while she was bending forwards, towards the uncovered flesh at the junction between the neck and the shoulder.

She was going to mark him.

This thought made its way to Teneb’s brain and rage flooded him, with a wave of his hand, he blasted Najira away from Harry. The dark-haired youth blinked his eyes, but Najira immediately recovered and took him back under her control who had wavered as she was flying away.

“Opheria, Djaryle, knock her out! I won’t be able to bring him back while she’s conscious!”



The two girls, immune to Najira's powers advanced on her and before the smaller girl could react, Opheria had stunned her and to be sure, placed her under the body binding curse

Meanwhile the boys had been restraining Harry, as he was still under her power and so, bound to protect her. Finally as Najira was knocked out, Harry went limp under the three youths.

Teneb went immediately through their link.

*Harry?*

*Teneb?* The answer was faint.

*Harry? Are you alright?* Teneb was filled with relief as he heard his friend's mental voice.

*I... I found Najira, she was unconscious and had several injuries. The head one was worrying and if I had waited for you to come, it would have worsened to a state neither of us would have been able to treat... without asking for a healer, but then I would have been accused of this aggression. I healed her, and I dropped my shield to do so. I remember healing the head injury last, she regain consciousness... and she...*

At this moment, Harry's mental voice broke, as the events came back to his memory.

Teneb went back to consciousness as he felt someone holding on him, sobbing. The elf was hurting for his friend. Harry hadn't needed this!

He had been about to be raped, both of them, like all the others, realized it. It didn't matter if he would have been under Najira's power, and thus willing to submit, it would have been a rape...

Teneb tried to reassure his friend through their link, sending him soothing feelings.

Slowly he felt his blood brother calm down. He looked around and saw that Celen had placed his hand on Harry's shoulder and was



using his own empathy to help the young wizard. He noticed that his friend wasn't standing too close of the raven haired-wizard, not to invade his personal space. Kobalt was standing near them, offering his silent support, but knowing that Harry didn't trust him enough yet to do more. Djaryle and Opheria were standing on one side, the first one with a pensive look on her face, the Magis with a clearly angered expression. Finally Harry let go of Teneb and started to buttoned up his robes, ashamed.

"Harry, you don't have to be ashamed," said Celen, the young empath having obviously picked on this feeling. "None of us would have been able to resist Najira's compulsion, had she passed our shields. You did something honorable by healing her, knowing the risks you were taking, don't feel ashamed for this."

Harry looked up, the conflict of his feelings visible in his eyes. Then, his eyes hardened, freezing themselves into two emeralds.

"Harry, you need to deal with this....," sighed Celen.

"I'll deal with this when I'll have time, but for now, I want answers, and once I have them..." He didn't say more, but the threat was audible in his voice."

The ebony-haired youth stood up, straightening his robes as he did so with a wave of his hand and walked to Najira. At first, Teneb thought he was going to strike her. But from what he could feel of his friend, Harry was moved by a cold and calm determination. Teneb knew this was the only thing preventing him from breaking down. He had sensed the shambles of his friend's emotions: his shame, his disgust at what had nearly happened.

"Strengthen your shields to your maximal, I'm going to revive her."

The other males nodded before putting all the power possible in their mental shields.

"Djaryle, Opheria, should you see that she's taking control of one of us, take us out, or knock her out again, if you don't mind."



The two girls agreed and moved near the half-Veela. Djaryle was eyeing him carefully, following his every movements... Soon they were forming a half circle around her.

With a wave of his hand, Harry revived her.

Her eyes sprang opened and she latched out. Teneb cringed under the power of her attack, but managed to maintain his shields. Kobalt seemed to have used his elementals abilities to strengthen his barriers and Celen had resorted to his empathy to reinforced his mental protections which were already strong because of his mental gift.

“Done?” Harry’s voice was cold. “Drink this.” He ordered her, handing her a vial of transparent liquid. As she was about to refuse, he continued. “either you drink it, or I force-feed it to you. Your choice.”

Najira seemed to shrunk under the withering gazes of all of them. She looked at her half-brother with hope. But Celen was barely concealing his disgust. Defeated, and knowing the human would do as he had said, she took the vial and gulped down its content. Harry waited for a few seconds for the potion to take effect. Arxeren had taught him how to brew Veritaserum and had followed him through every steps of the potion making. He knew the potion would work.

“What’s your name?”

“Najira Tyra Hoersen.”

“It’s her mother’s name,” explained Celen, “Father never recognized her so she had to keep her mother’s name.”

“When were you born?”

“March, 21st”

“Najira why did you do this?”

At this question, Najira’s face twisted with different feeling, loathing, despair, yearning, sadness, hopelessness.



"You don't understand, you can't understand!" she yelled, her face disfigured by a hurt twist of her features.

"Why can't we understand, Najira," Harry's voice was even, calm, something which had red flags raising in Teneb's head.

"You don't understand what it is to be a stranger in your own father's house, to know that your father won't even acknowledge that you're his, to see the disgust in everyone's eyes, to be used as a bait, a-a slut by your own father!" Self-loathing was perceptible in her voice.

Harry stayed silent, knowing that now he had her talking, she wouldn't stop, the Veritaserum would make sure of it. That's why he had asked a vague question, she would tell them everything her mind would connect with her motives to do what she had done. He repressed a shiver, before squashing it to nothing, he would crack in his room.

"I have little control over my powers. Before I could deal with them using the tricks my mother had taught me. But since my inheritance, it isn't enough, the powers are too much... They're taking control!... My mother had warned me about it, but she died before she could tell me what to do, and father exiled all the other Veelas." Bitterness and resentment were audible in her voice, "Nobody knew what to do... so they blocked them as well as they could... But the blocks were temporary: my powers were eating them, slowly disintegrating them. I was controlled by my Veela's desires: I had to seduce males, needed to feel their adoration. The desire for it was so strong... And a mate, my desires to mate were getting stronger and stronger...I NEEDED it!" She yelled the last parts, tears falling down her cheeks. "Then you came and my father decided he had to have you! He ordered me to seduce you! I didn't mind a lot you were good-looking... But I failed, your shields were too strong. I tried to befriend you, but you were suspicious of me, not without reason. After the induction, my father come to see me. He had changed his mind. I wasn't to only seduce you. I was to mark you as my own, as my mate and sleep with you. I had to get myself pregnant with your child!!" His voice nearly hysterical at this.



"I refused! He told me that if I didn't do it, he would never teach me how to control my powers! That I'd spend the rest of my life controlled by my urges! He lifted the block Demenor had placed on me, but implanted a compulsion in me not to target elves, Magis or Elementals. It only left you. He told me that you were powerful, that if I obeyed him and marked you, you would be my mate, that you would serve me. You were good looking, the induction had proved it, powerful, and Veelas are drawn to power and you were an innocent... I came to like the idea of marking you, you would have been mine, all mine! At the beginning of the ball, I had troubles keeping myself in check. I wanted you! You looked so good, dressed as you were! But then you went to dance with that Elfish girl and that Magis. I wanted to kill them. You were mine, only mine!"

She shouted the last words.

"After I went to the gardens, my father came to find me. He told me he had slipped some herbs in the drinks which would lower your mental shields, and he gave me a potion to enhance my own power. He told me I was to mark you tonight and to bed you too. I agreed eagerly, you had been driving me crazy since the beginning of the ball. He then told me that the only way to have you lower your shields was to have you heal me. At this moment, I would have agreed to anything if it meant that you would be mine. He beat me, nothing too serious as he wasn't sure of your Healing's abilities. It worked well. And I had you under my control! You were mine! All mine, your body, spirit and soul were mine. And my father would have taught me how to control my powers! You would have been mine! I would have made it so good to you! But they came and spoiled everything!"

At this she directed hateful glances at the others, before starting to rock herself back and forth, muttering "mine, mine..."

After hearing all of this, none of them knew how to feel. They were torn between anger, disgust but also pity. Najira was pathetic. She was a young woman driven by powers she had little or no control over and exploited by her own father. On the other hand she had confessed having agreed to play along, having even wanted it.



Harry told her to stop. He handed her another vial which she emptied. The glazed look left her eyes, leaving her horrified at what she had just said.

Harry looked at her, his voice cold. Teneb could feel the cold, wild, barely restrained rage swirling under the calm appearance, alarms going off in his mind.

"I will never forgive you for what you nearly did to me, even if you're not completely guilty of this. You nearly took away one thing I treasure, my right to have a family of my choice. Even if I'm not holding you completely responsible, I can't allow you to keep on going like this. So I have a proposition for you, both for your sake and others' sakes: either I place the strongest block I can on your powers, or you come with me to my world. I'll present you to other part-Veelas. They will teach you some control. In both case, I'm putting restrains on you."

All eyes were fixed on him.

"What's your choice?" he asked harshly.

Najira looked at him, stopping her rocking, hope starting to fill her eyes. With a small voice, she answered.

"I'll come with you, I loath this world."

Harry nodded sharply.

"Alright, I'm placing a block on you until we reach my world."

He started to murmur a chant, Teneb recognized as one for one of the strongest blocks known. Bronze threads shot at Najira and weaved themselves around her before being slowly absorbed by her body.

The young half-Veela shook with relief and started to sob until she fell into blissful unconsciousness.

None of them moved for a few seconds when finally Celen approached her and deepened her unconscious state, plunging into a



deep slumber. When he looked up, there was no hate in his eyes, only pity.

"I'm disgusted by what she did, but I pity her... and I'm feeling a bit responsible, we're the reason why she became what she now is, we allowed this to happen."

"Once she'd been trained, she'll be a force to reckon with," said Harry, "And I'll make sure to tell Fleur to ingrain morals so deep into her skull that she will never even think about using her powers to bend someone to her will alone," said Harry. "But if I can't forgive her, it doesn't mean that I'm holding her responsible of this." He turned to the prince, his eyes glittering dangerously, fire dancing just above the surface of the green orbs.

"Do you remember earlier when I asked you what will you do if I was to accuse your father of oath-breaking?"

The prince nodded gravely.

"Then I'll need your answer, now..."

Teneb was eyeing Harry warily then took one step back, signaling for the others to do so. Opheria and Kobalt had already backed away slightly, both having sense the power swarming in Harry, both magical and elemental, a power which was growing by the second, raw, fuelled by a cold, pure rage. Celen was out of range and Djaryle followed his example.

Suddenly a ring of fire surrounded Harry, but the thing that had Teneb feel a flicker of worry was that the flames weren't red or orange, but a pale yellow and blue. Blue flames asked for an enormous amount of power. Blue fire was the strongest elemental manifestation for the fire gifted.

*Harry... please, get a grip! Your element is going haywire!* he sent hurriedly, while sending a quick message to Kaelia. She would warn Arxeren.

*Teneb... I have trouble with it... you should leave...*



This had Teneb scared, really scared. If Harry admitted this, he had to get everyone as far as possible.

“We need to go as far away as possible... His element is getting out of control...”

“What!” yelled Opheria.

Teneb sent her a sharp look.

“He’s a fire gifted, and I think this night’s events are enough to send him over the edge, so GET OUT!”

Opheria was scared. They all knew how destructive a fire gifted could be if his power got out of control. Millenias ago, a strong fire gifted had snapped and his power had went out of control. He had destroyed everything in a fifteen kilometers radius, creating giant fire tornados which had ravaged the whole area, before all the elementals and element gifted combined their powers to take them out. The fire gifted had died, burnt to death by his own power. There had been no survivor. Since then, fire gifted had always been treated with more vigilance than others.

Teneb was only praying that Arxeren would intervene in time. He watched in fascination as the blue flames grew brighter, more powerful and bigger. They couldn’t leave... even if they did, Teneb realized that the explosion would catch them nonetheless.

Suddenly Kobalt drew up his own element surrounding him with water.

“Teneb I need you to give me your elemental energy. I can slow his slipping out of control, but I don’t think I’ll be able to stop him.”

Nodding Teneb, linked himself to the Elemental, giving him his elemental energy, air would be useless against fire, but water had a chance... Meanwhile, he tried to pierce through the veil of rage that was surrounding Harry.

*Harry! Harry! Damnit! Get a grip!*

*Teneb... can’t... losing...*



Kaelia! Where is Arxeren!

He's finishing his rest.

His REST!

He would have been of no help, exhausted as he was... He will be here in exactly two minutes. You need to keep him in check for two minutes.

We'll try, but hurry!

He returned his attention to the others.

"We need to held him in check for two minutes. Then my guardian and his will subdue his power."

Kobalt nodded as he finished a shield of water around Harry.

"I'll need your support for this. Channel your powers through me, it should hold up for two minutes at least..." he said through gritted teeth.

Teneb approached him and placed his hand on his shoulder, imitated by Djaryle who now had a determined and eager glint in her eyes and Opheria. Celen was about to do it too when Teneb stopped him.

"Celen, look over us, if you sense one of us is weakening, take him out of the fusion."

The prince nodded.

The others started to pour their powers in Kobalt merging their energies to the Elemental's one who then directed it into the shield. All of them felt the pressure on the shield grow bigger and bigger. They were sweating under the strain. Kobalt was the worse as he was the focal point of all the energies.

Teneb was slowly counting the seconds. Time seemed to slow down, each seconds longer than the previous. As he neared 100, he felt the power inside the water dome double. This time, the shield nearly



broke down, it was only by a miracle of will that they managed to keep it standing, but Djaryle had to withdraw from the fusion, the strain being too much for her. She fell on her knees, gasping for air.

That left only Kobalt, Opheria and Teneb to hold the shield. The blue flames were dancing under the water's surface, superb and lethal. Teneb could see the form of his friends, flames swirling around him, his eyes blazing with fire, completely lost to the wild element.

Teneb felt Opheria starting to draw power from the nature around her to balance the departure of Djaryle.

Just fifteen more seconds. Teneb felt himself shook as the power inside the dome grew again, ten seconds, five... two...one...

*TENEB!*

--

*TENEB!*

As he heard Harry's cry, he felt the shield crumbled at the last seconds as Kobalt fainted from the pressure. Teneb closed his eyes as he waited for fire to claim him while he fell on the grass.

He waited, and waited, but the explosion never came. He opened his eyes tiredly.

Harry was huddled on the ground, in the middle of huge circle of burned grass, sobbing.

He'd have liked to be able to comfort his friend, but he was too tired to move, he just wanted to sleep.

Suddenly, he felt energy course right through him.

"Looking around, he saw Gae standing near him, her rainbow eyes starring worriedly at him as she refilled his energy's reserve."

We're sorry we couldn't be there earlier, but we were retained a bit.

"How are?..."



Your friends are fine, all of them.

Teneb sighed in relief. He stood up, leaning on his dragon.

“Thank you Gae... By the way, may I present you Djaryle?”

The Emnag looked for a few seconds at the young elf, her expression solemn. The great Dragon tilted her head, narrowing her eyes a bit before turning her attentions back to her rider.

Thanks for helping my bonded, young Djaryle, she said not looking at her, focused on Teneb.

Teneb turned to Celen. The prince looked shaken but alright.

“Gae, I know it’s a lot to ask, but could you give a little boost of energy to Djaryle and Celen?”

With pleasure, Heldren. she answered, this time privately. She approached the prince and the Elfish girl. Soon, both of them were fit again. Kobalt was being taken care by his own dragon, as was Opheria. He noticed that the other Elders were also present.

Once they were all up, they turned to look at the place where Harry had been. A giant circle of ashes was marring the gardens, in its center, Harry was still sobbing.

They all approached him.

“But Rexeran! I nearly killed them! I’m a monster! They’ll hate me now!” His voice was laced with self-loathing and guilt.

Teneb shook his head, as if he was going to abandon him for something he had no control over. He could see the deep burns on Harry’s body which he had received as he had been trying to fight for control. But he knew that even if Harry appeared confident, sure of himself, strong, deep down he was mentally fragile, if you knew where to strike. Teneb knew that though Harry didn’t realize it, his childhood had left scars on his psyche, that not even his stays at school and his friends had managed to heal. The tortures he had witnessed nightly had enhanced his feeling of helplessness and



despair, even if he tried to hide it. He was scared for the others, and Teneb had discovered that he strived for acceptance of who he was. He positively yearned for friendship.

He was about to kneel near him, when Celen beat him to it.

--

Harry was horrified at what he had nearly done. It had taken both Kaelia's and Arxeren's power, helped by the providential arrival of the Elders and some other dragons to subdue him. They had been just in time as the shield had crumbled just at that moment.

He broke down, sobbing, drained physically and mentally.

He was a monster, a freak, a murderer!

Energy flew back to him.

Astyan...

His body still racked by sobs, he made the form of Rexeran through his tears.

"You-you are going to re-reject me, aren't-aren't you?" he asked through his sobs.

Why would I want to do that, Astyan? You did nothing to deserve such a punishment.

"I lost control! I nearly destroyed everything! I nearly killed!"

You had no control over the situation. You're not the true responsible. And you didn't, you fought against it, from the look of your burns, I can tell that you tried to resist. You and your friends bought ourselves enough time to stop you. I'm proud of you, my bonded.

"But..."

You and your friends did yourself proud tonight. You acted like true riders.



"I don't have friends anymore, they'll hate me."

Why should they hate you?

"But Rexeran! I nearly killed them! I'm a monster! They'll hate me now!"

His dragon stayed silent.

Suddenly he felt a presence near him. Looking up, he managed to recognize Celen through his tearful eyes. He looked down immediately, waiting for the hateful words, the disgust he was sure would come.

"Why would we hate you?" Celen was looking at Harry, his face devoid of emotions. His gift was telling him that pity wouldn't be good, kindness would be weird, they weren't close enough for it, no he had to stay at a distance but offer comfort as all empaths did.

Empathy was a curse and a blessing. It made you able to help people, it helped to deal with emotional problems, solve difficulties or fights, but it made you vulnerable and compelled you to help those in need. Celen had always compared it to Healing. There was the same need, yearning to help, the difference being that healers healed the body while he tried to heal the mind or the soul.

Harry's jaw fell to the floor. Of all the reactions he had been waiting for, this one was not one he had been thinking of. They didn't hate him? Hope flared in his heart at this. He dried his eyes with what was left of his sleeves, then starred at the others standing behind Celen.

He looked in their eyes, trying to find some fear, something close to anger, disgust, hate. But only saw relief and... even some understanding, even in Kobalt's and Opheria's.

See, Astyan, they don't hate you... whispered Rexeran in his mind.

His throat tightened with relief as he struggled with his tears, trying to stop them from falling. He glanced at them, whispering a quiet "Thank you"



He found himself in a tight embrace. Surprised and startled by this, he was at first assaulted by memories of Najira embracing him, her hands caressing... He blocked this train of thought. This embrace wasn't even coming remotely close to that. He finally made out the traits of the one hugging him. Djaryle. She was reminding him so much of Hermione and Ron, she was acting a bit like them, like a friend, but she wasn't, was she, after all he had only met her a few hours ago... He found it difficult to concentrate on this train of thoughts; his mind was getting a bit fuzzy as he tried to think about it. Finally he shook his head, trying to clear his mind. As he looked up, all thought about Djaryle and the strange interaction between them were gone from his mind.

"You dolt," she said as she released him and whacked him over the head, "What were you thinking? You scared me out of my wits! With whom would I have dance?"

This question sent Harry into nervous peals of laughter, followed by all the others. Djaryle paused for a few seconds then looked at them, bewildered.

"What?" she asked, her confusion only making them laugh harder.

Once they managed to get a hold over themselves, they came to sit near Harry. Teneb was the next one to speak.

"Harry, when you started to lose control, I wasn't scared of you, well, maybe a little, but what I was more scared about was our sake, our, meaning you and us. Moreover, you'll not get rid of me that easily." He took his human friend's arm and clasped their forearms.

"Ilan ory sianter, Ilan ory saroll, Desen hela athia" (united by mind, united by soul, death or life) he looked at his friend.

"Lith tarx jomi" (linked through all) Harry finished the oath with a shaky voice and smile. Then Harry turned to Kobalt and Opheria and this time he was the one to speak.

"I don't really know what to say, except, thank you, both of you"



The Elemental and the Magis returned him his smile.

“Do you remember what you asked us two days ago, about our motives for proposing to be your and Teneb’s seconds?”

Harry nodded.

“To be truthful, at that time, my answer would have been that your power and status had played a large part in this proposition. I was feeling guilty and you were powerful.” He paused, trying to phrase his next words correctly.

“Now, if you asked me why I decided to act today, erecting this shield, I would answer that you made me think over a lot of things, and that you made me think for myself and take some decisions by myself. The vision you showed us this morning... I think that was the trigger. You forced me to see that humans were people like us, people who were suffering, people who had lives of their own, families... Above all, you proved to be honorable and someone I would like to know to learn to call friend. So now my answer would be that I acted because I knew I could help and because it was what I had to do.”

Kobalt blue eyes were locked on Harry’s as he spoke.

Harry nodded at this declaration.

“My turn. You must remember what I answered the Xhan and the Xhana this very morning... That I might forgive but not forget?”

Kobalt nodded.

“I will stand by this. I can’t forget the past, it made me be what I am, and I can’t dismiss it, but I can forgive. This night by choosing to stay and help, you proved to me that you deserved the name of rider. You earned my respect for that and some of my trust. I can’t say that everything is alright, but if you’re willing, I think that we can start over again with a clean slate. You too, Opheria.” He extended his hands, noticing the burns on them.

“Hello, I’m Harry Potter, pleased to meet you.”



Kobalt took the offered hand.

“The pleasure is mine, I’m Kobalt.”

“I’m Opheria” said the Magis, closing her four-fingered hand on Harry’s.

During the whole thing, the Elders had been standing on the sides, looking carefully at the youths gathered there, evaluating them.

Finally, Rexeran spoke up.

All of you did us proud. You deserved the name of Dragonriders... he said.

Harry nodded and stood up, realizing at this moment, the extension of his burns as white hot pain shot through him as he did so.

Gae approached him and a few seconds later, he was healed.

You know what you must do, Astyan, But be wary, appearance are sometimes misleading she told him privately.

Harry gave her a pointed look, a bit bewildered at her last words, but nodded and turned to the others.

“Celen, do you remember the question I asked you before losing it?”

This brought them back to the circumstances which had led to this mess.

The prince nodded and stood up to come near the young wizard.

“My father made his choices, I made mine. I chose to side with you and won’t repeat it again. My father broke several oaths tonight. The man that was my father no longer exists. I’ll follow the decision that will be taken tonight concerning his crimes.”

As Celen said those words, he couldn’t help but feel a pang of hurt at the thought that his father was no longer the man he had always thought as his model. Harry placed his hands on his shoulder.



“I’ll await eagerly your ascension to the throne, and this day, you’ll be able to count on me.”

And Harry did something he had always refused to do before King Enrys: he bowed before the prince. Looking up, he met the startled eyes of the heir of Horevald.

“I think you’ll understand why I can’t pledge you allegiance, and I don’t think I could anyway. My true place is among my people, but know that my support to you is assured.”

Celen gave him a large smile at this and returned the salute.

Teneb approached his childhood friend.

“I’ve never been prouder to be your friend than I am now, Celen. My allegiance to you will be pledged when you’ll be crowned.”

“I don’t think so,” replied Celen. “I don’t want my High counselor to submit to me, or else how would he beat some sense into me if I started to act like an idiot?”

“As you wish, friend.”

“Brother,” corrected Celen.

Teneb smiled at him.

The moment ended as an owl sprang from a tree.

You should go, young ones, you have still a lot to do tonight. Said Gae.

But before you left, allow us to give you the clothes you earned. Said Rexeran.

All of them were surrounded by a warm glow and as it faded, they were left fully dressed. Both Harry and Teneb were dressed in their Athar’s clothes, their swords at their sides. Kobalt and Opheria had the outfit of full-fledged riders: the red tunic, slightly shorter than the Athar’s one, as it stopped at their knees, the sleeves only had their



hem filled with flames. In their back, was sewed the same dragon and their collar was also lined up with flames. They too had their swords on their sides and a medallion was shining on their chest, along with their torque. Kobalt's was dark blue and Opheria's dark purple, both of them were carved as were Teneb's and Harry's. The four of them were also wearing a long black cloak, the only difference being in their hem's color, fitting their dragon's type. Harry turned his attention to Celen. The prince was dressed up in black and silver and looked regal... a thin diadem was placed on his head, enhancing his rank. Finally, Harry looked at Djaryle. She was wearing a long simple white dress. A thin light blue veil was fixed on her now loose hair and fell down her back. A simple silver chain with an amethyst was resting on her chest. Her sleeves flowed down her arms, covering her hands.

She looked up and starred at them strangely, asking for explanations.

Des approached her.

The Dusker seemed to explain her a few things, from the twisting of her features. The expressions varied from shocked, surprised, annoyed, upset, relieved... Then she nodded, apparently a bit upset. The Dusker nodded and went back to Aurine's side, casting a look at Rexeran.

The Golden creature, glanced at the elf and Harry immediately knew he the Elder was speaking to her. She paled and trembled slightly, but then composed herself without anybody noticing it.

Our job is done here, young ones. said Rexeran. We will remain nearby in case the situation request our intervention, but now it's time for you to bear the burden of riders.

They nodded as the Elders as well as Polath and Nelan disappeared.

Harry, are you alright?

Arxeren's voice was frantic.

I'm not fine, but I'll be better from now on, Arxeren...



Thanks the Powers for that... You know you'll have to pay for what you did to me and Kaelia. You knocked us out for minutes!

I'm sorry...

No need, I can understand the situation. Just to tell you that your near explosion had at least a positive effect, your controls over fire were strengthened when you fought it, you deepened your control. Now you should be able to control blue fire. But I must ask you to be careful with your anger... Speaking of this, I think you need to have another way to block your element should the situation get out of hand again...

What do you propose?

A compulsion with a password. Upon hearing this word, it would cause your element to be blocked. But we'll do it later...

Alright... and Arxeren?

What?

Thank you for everything...

The guardian didn't answer.

Harry turned to the others, his expression grave.

"Let's go."

An aura of blue flames erupted around him.

"Harry!" yelled the others, staring horrified at him.

He looked at them.

"Don't worry I can control them, now."

They seemed relieved at this and even smiled.

Wordlessly, Teneb drew up his air aura, while Kobalt did the same with water. Opheria let his magical aura shine through. Celen extended his arm to Djaryle.



“Shall we go, my lady? Our escort is ready.”

“We shall, my prince, but what about ?...” She pointed to Najira, who was still unconscious.

Wordlessly, Teneb approached the half-Veela and picked her up.

“By the way, how come nobody noticed that something was going on?” asked Harry.

“There are wards on the castle which block people from magically scan it. But if it blocks outside probing, it also blocks people inside from sensing outside magical events.”

They then headed back for the ballroom. Celen and Djaryle walking in the middle, Harry and Teneb on their right and left sides, Kobalt and Ophelia closing the procession. As they left, Harry then noticed that the large black burnt circle he had caused had been restored and he addressed a small thank you to the Elders.

As they arrived near the ballroom, Harry willed his Athar mark to show, remembering something Arxeren had told him a long time ago.

Athar were not only leaders among the riders, they also held a rank of priest. And Harry would use this today.

--

They entered the ball room and walked to the throne, silence slowly falling upon the room as people noticed them. They were gasps as they marched towards the stage where the King and the Queen were seated. They stopped a few meters away. At this moment, Celen and Djaryle, after bowing to the two Athars, went to one side. Celen knew he wasn't seeing his friends now, they weren't Teneb or Harry anymore, but the Athars, leaders, priests, judges.

Horried cries erupted as people finally took in the blue flames surrounding Harry. Teneb went to lay Najira on a couch near her half-brother. Straightening himself, he went back to his friend's side. Together, they made their auras disappear, but if you looked closely



you would see flames dancing in Harry's eyes, glittering dangerously, but controlled this time.

The young wizard turned to look at the herald which had announced them at the beginning of the evening.

"From Athar to Herald, priest to messenger, I require, as Athar, the Xhan's and the Xhana's presence as quickly as possible."

The herald bowed to him and left silently.

Then Teneb and him approached Demenor.

The man had arrived an hour after the beginning of the ball, going over what he had been told earlier in the evening. He had then come to the ballroom and had been discussing with Doryan and a few of his riders, trying to plan for the punishment carrying. Le looked warily at the two youths... no Athars, before him.

He couldn't remember a group of riders were the Athar(s) had looked so fit for their charge, so... regal, so Knight-like. Yes that was it... They were reminding him of the description of the Knights of Old time...

"From Athars to the Headquarter's leader, we require the right to make justice and uphold our Laws," stated Teneb, breaking the man's train of thoughts.

Shakily, Demenor rose from his seat.

"From leader to Athars, I ask of your grievances"

Those words had barely escaped his lips that he felt his mind trapped between two others and drawn into a link. The two other mental presences were strong and razor sharp, holding his own mind into a mental iron grip.

Slowly Demenor witnessed Najira's confession, then Harry's loss of control. He wanted to look away, to end the vision, but the presence forced him to watch through everything they wanted him to see. He was finally released of the link.



Demenor felt himself froze at what he had just seen, and sensed his determination hardened. He turned and looked at the King who seemed a bit uneasy.

“Enrys, you fool... What did you do?” he whispered, looking with horror at the King, knowing that he wouldn’t be able to spare his old friend the punishment he was about to receive. The Laws couldn’t be overlooked. But as he thought of it, the old Enrys was dead the moment he decided to carry on this plan...

“From Athars to leader, will you stand by our judgment?”

Demenor turned to look at them.

“From leader to Athars, your grievances are legitimate, I recognize your right to deliver fair judgment.”

His voice rang in the room.

At this moment, the Xhan and Xhana stepped in the room. As it had barely taken them more than ten minutes to arrive, it confirmed Harry’s suspicion as to an other mean of communication and travel from the castle to the temples. Both of them had their ceremonial clothes on.

“We answered the call of the Athars,” said Cya.

“We required your guidance as Athars to Gods’ Children,” said Teneb.

The two adults looked at them.

“Your request is granted.”

They moved to one side of the room.

Then Harry and Teneb approached the King.

“King Enrys,” Harry’s voice echoed in the room, “You are presently accused of oath-breaking: Oath-breaking once, by trespassing the law of the riders, overlooking their independence from royalty, oath-



breaking twice, by trying to force someone against his will, oath-breaking thrice by lying to your people.”

Teneb followed.

“Oath breaking once by placing your lands and subject in possible harm’s way, oath-breaking twice by abusing of your power for your own need, oath-breaking thrice for striking your own kin.”

“Will people testify of his deeds?”

Kobalt stepped near them, speaking out loud.

“As rider to Athars and priests, may I speak the truth under the God’s children witness. I testify of these deeds. I recognize the truth in those accusations and found the accused guilty of oath-breaking against the rider’s laws.”

The Xhan nodded to him.

Opheria walked near them too.

“As rider to Athars and priests, may I speak the truth under the Gods’ children witness. I testify of these deeds, recognizing the accused guilty of oath breaking by abusing his own power for his needs and trying to bend someone against his will.”

This time the Xhana assessed her words.

There was a pause, a silence etched on the room and the King started to grew more confident. If the Athars couldn’t find more people to confirmed their accusations, he would escape the punishment that would be given, should they complete this ritual.

Suddenly Djaryle spoke up.

She had been standing on one side, watching the whole scene displayed itself. She had been torn between different feelings, but in the end, had stepped forwards. She had chosen her path, like the Sowaroc had said she would and she would bear with what would come.



“As citizen of this land to Athars and priests, may I speak the truth under the Gods’ children witness. I testify of these deeds and assess the truth in the accusation of oath breaking against the lands and people by placing them deliberately in harm’s way and lying.”

An heavy silence fell on the ballroom, every eyes fixed on the King who was by now sweating. The powers surrounding Harry and Teneb had grown as their accusations were verified. They just needed someone to assess the truth of their last one.

Gasps and cries erupted in the room as Celen walked to his friends’s side.

“As blood heir of this land to Athars and priest, may I speak the truth under the God’s children witness. I testify of these deeds and recognize the oath-breaker guilty of striking his own Kin by using my half-sister as a tool of power, blackmailing her, endangering her sanity and striking her to achieve his own purposes.”

The Xhan and Xhana walked to them.

“Your grievances are legitimate, we testify of the truth of your words. May the Powers guide you in your judgment and bless you with fairness.” They placed their hands on the Athar’s marks. They turned to the King.

“From this moment we withdrew and nullify any links to King Enrys. Oath-breaker, he was accused, oath-breather he is. Any allegiances or oath to him are now null.”

The Queen stood up and walked to her husband.

“As Queen of this land, I, Valera Ryll Vyriannight, hereby sever all bounds and obligation to Enrys Olban Ikerstorm and strip him of any authority over his descent. So witnessed, so decreed,” she finished taking off the ring she had on her right ring finger. Then walked to her son.

The King was now standing, his face contorting with rage.



“I’ll have the lot of you hanging by tomorrow morning. Guards! Arrest them.”

Nobody moved, the Guards remained at their place, ignoring the King’s order.

“GUARDS!”

Seeing the soldiers weren’t going to move, he turned to Doryan.

“Doryan! Help me!”

Teneb’s father’s face was old and drawn with sadness.

“Enrys, you brought this upon yourself, I can’t do anything.”

Harry took a step forwards.

“Hear our judgment, King Enrys, from this day to your passing, you are stripped of your powers and status, with no authority left save on yourself. You will spent the next three hundred years in an hospice to redeem your soul by helping others. At the end of this period, if the priests and priestesses saw that you had a true change of heart, you’ll be free to go, otherwise you’ll be locked away to reflect on your sins. So...” His voice was laced with power and as he was about to enforce his decision by the ritual ‘so witnessed so decreed’, the King raised his hands.

“Never! The line of the Kings will end now!”

A ball of Dark Light formed in his hands and he threw it at Celen who starred at the ball with wide eyes, too stunned to move. As the ball was about to hit him, he was surrounded by blue flames which formed a protective wall around him. The ball hit the flames and dissolved against them. The King raised his other hand. Drawing up an obsidian aura. He started to chant and Everyone felt the temperature dropped. Harry sensed something ripping around him. He drew up his own aura and shields, followed by Teneb, Kobalt, Celen, Opheria and Djaryle. The aura around the King thickened. Harry frowned, there was something strange with this aura, she



seemed to be divided...The King's chanting grew louder and Harry paled as he heard some words...

"Teneb, everyone, place your strongest shields on the room, he's summoning something!"

They obeyed, Demenor, Doryan and Cya and Luan following their lead.

"Opheria, try to find his focal point. None of us can kill a full Demon if this is what he is summoning... The only way to banished it is to destroy its focal point."

The Magis nodded and closed her eyes, concentrating as the others strengthened the shields on the room.

Suddenly a rip appeared in the air and started to widen to form a portal. Shadows seemed to swarm in it, trying to pass, then one of them stepped through the rip and started to grow bigger and bigger. Harry immediately recognized a third rank demon, from Arxeren's explanations. The creature was huge, about three meters high. His massive legs were ended by large paws with deadly looking blades, the knees were bend the other way. The head was a mix between wolf, ox and human. It had the general structure of the ox, even the horns, but more angled, with wolf ears, fur and teeth. The eyes were human-like, but completely black with only red specks in them. His skin looked like lava: crackled with red lines running up and down his body. A pair of wings were fixed on his back.

/Who called me?/ The voice was rash and stony.

The King approached him.

"I did, obey me!"

The demon looked about to strike Enrys, but finally bowed his head.

/What will be my reward?/

The King glanced at the people assembled in the room who were starring in horror at him.



“Their life.”

The demon face contorted in something which could be called a smile.

/Very well, What are your orders?/

“Kill them all, but spare the females. I’ll need them.”

The Demon nodded and turned to them, anticipation showing in his eyes.

Harry turned to Opheria who was still concentrating.

“Opheria?”

“I’m trying! It’s something close to him....” Sweat was running down her face under the effort she was doing.

Sighing, Harry looked at Cya and Luan.

“Athars, we will protect the others, Solyen and Lunai will help us in this task.”

Teneb nodded.

“Father, Demenor, would you protect the Xhan and Xhana?”

Both adult seemed about to protest, but seeing the determined and stubborn look in the youths’ face knew they wouldn’t win this fight. To shield the room and allow the Athars to drop their own barriers to concentrate on fighting, the Xhan and the Xhana would enter a trance and have to stand outside the shield, exposing themselves to harm.

“You’re not leavin us much choice, Teneb,” sighed his father, “but we’re not armed...”

Teneb turned to look at the others.

“Would one of you give their sword to them?”

Wordlessly, Opheria handed her sword to Doryan while Harry unshrank a blade from his pocket. He turned to Teneb.



“What, you thought I wasn’t going to bring one?”

Shaking his head, the young elf took it and handed it to Demenor, muttering about paranoïc people. Then he faced his friend.

“Djaryle, stay with Najira,”

The girl was about to protest but nodded after a few moments.

“Celen, you and Opheria and Kobalt must find the focal point and destroy it...”

“But...” Celen was about to protest.

“Celen,” snapped Harry, breaking from the silence he had been under, “Opheria can’t defend herself like this you and Kobalt have to make sure nothing happen to her.

“Celen,” said Kobalt, “Harry is right, and we’d better hurry up.”

His lips drawn in a thin, Celen nodded curtly.

“Let’s go then,” he turned to Harry and Teneb, “you better stay in one piece, both of you, or there’ll be hell to pay if one of you gets himself killed!”

Without waiting for an answer he went to Kobalt and Opheria. The Demon was advancing on them. Harry took a few calming breath, centering himself. He wasn’t looking forwards what Teneb and him had to do.

“Teneb, you know what to do,” His voice was eerie.

“I do.”

Harry closed his eyes, tapping in his power. The Elders couldn’t intervene in this. He sensed that the King had set up something in this room... something which would stop the from entering... Some sort of ward... Shaking his head he focused back on the problem at hand, he would worry about this later.

In a murmur, he addressed a last prayer



“Elders, I know you can’t help us now, but may you give us the strength to win.” Then out loud, he spoke, in a whisper.

“I, Harry Potter, abandon myself to the Powers. May I become their blade in this fight to defend their laws.”

At his side, Teneb uttered the same sentence.

At this moment, he felt a white hot energy course through him. It hurts his whole body was on fire, he felt his being fade, under this energy. Abandoning himself to the power he was being the vessel, he let it take control, even supplying it with his own power and knowledge. Suddenly everything stopped.

He opened his eyes. They weren’t green anymore but a swirling silver blue.

He was ready

He let his shield drop, sensing the Xhan and Xhana erect another, fuelled by the power of their gods.

Let the fight begin.

--

Demenor settled near the priest, Doryan on the priestess’ side. He looked as the prince and the two riders parted from the Athars, The Magis was in a deep trance and the two boys were holding her. His eyes locked on the two Athars. He sensed calm emitting from them, then suddenly a wave of power, so strong he stumbled a bit. They opened their eyes and he understood... They had let themselves be possessed by the Powers themselves. He shuddered, this was dangerous, they could lose themselves in this amount of energy, and once the Powers would leave, have their inner being sucked out of their body, leaving only a shell behind. Shaking his head he concentrated on his task, guarding the two priests. He felt the shields dropped and the Demon launched himself towards them, but before he could approach close enough, the Xhan and Xhana had built up a new shield; Growling, the beast turned to them and Demenor



trembled under the demoniac gaze but stood his ground. He would conquer his honor back, but by his acts and not by killing himself...

The Demon roared.

Teneb and Harry had struck at him, hitting his leg.

He tried to blast them away, but they avoided his hands and struck again, drawing another roar from the beast. Two blades of fire appeared in his hands and started to struck at them. But Harry and Teneb were too small for him to managed to hit. Drawing himself to its full height he closed his wings around himself, growling. Then he opened them again, about twenty black balls falling to the grounds.

/Rise, my minions/

To Demenor's horror, the balls started to shake and small armed creatures popped out of them. They were about a meter high. They looked like small orcs, but covered with fur.

/Kill them all!/

The small beasts raised their weapons and with shrill cries ran at them.

Demenor raised his sword.

He might die, but he would die with his honor back.

--

Kobalt watched horrified as the beast ran to them. Raising his swords he gathered his Elemental powers. He had promised to protect Opheria and would do so with his life. Celen drew his sword up along with his Magic.

The beast attacked. Kobalt swung his sword on the left, chopping the head of the ones which had been attacking on his side. Raising his hand, he shot shards of ice which embedded themselves in another, cutting his throat, and piercing the eyes of his neighbor which fell on the ground with shrilly cries of pain. He lunged forwards impaling



another on his sword. In the corner of his eyes, he saw two approached Opheria in his back. Whirling, he shot ice at them, effectively killing them. He sensed a movement behind him and step aside but not quick enough as he felt a stinging pain on his thigh.

Spinning he felt the neck of the beast broke as he sent her flying against a wall.

His eyes widened as he saw more balls falling on the floor.

Looking at Opheria, he prayed for her to find that damn focal.

Celen was not doing better. The creatures were immune to magic and he had resorted to his blade.

He was slashing, cutting heads, slitting throats, cutting through their bodies. But the Demon was making more and more of them.

Suddenly as he was about to get desperate, Opheria's eyes shot open.

"Celen, Kobalt, I've found it!"

Relief shot through the prince as he looked at the Magis

"Where?"

"The big stone on the chair he is sitting on." The young Magis took out her own sword and started to make her way towards the stage, cutting heads right and left. The others following her.

--

Harry and Teneb were still bothering the Demon. They were killing his creatures without a thought, their swords a deadly blurs. But the strength of these things weren't in their skills or power, it was in their number. For each beasts they killed, two came back. Harry was using his element to its fullest and shooting fireballs around, setting creatures on fire in a blink of an eye, all the while making the most of his fighting skills. Both of them were completely possessed by the powers and felt like puppets. Suddenly both of their marks shone



brightly and they were engulfed into twin flames, carbonizing everything in a two meters range. From the back of his mind, the small which was still Harry remembered that their marks allowed them to share and join their powers. So Teneb could access to his element through him, as he could use air through his friend.

He felt himself strike the Demon, drawing a roar from the huge creature. He keep on striking, losing Teneb from his view's range.

Suddenly he heard another cry, this time of pain. Glancing up, he saw Teneb on the creature's back, his sword plunged in the junction between the neck and the shoulder. He felt his energy being drained from him to his friend, as Teneb or the Power possessing Teneb, started to pour his energy through the sword.

Unfortunately, the Demon managed to make Teneb fall of his neck, the sword still stick in his neck. His friend used his element to slow down his fall and summoned his sword back. Meanwhile, Harry was keeping on striking the Demon but the creature had an extremely thick hide.

They fell back into killing the orc-like creatures.

--

Demenor and Doryan were busy fighting the beasts off the Xhan and Xhana.

"Damnit! How many of them are they!" shouted Doryan, panting slightly as he chopped the head of another one.

Demenor smiled grimly, he was getting tired, it would end soon... the other riders present in the room couldn't intervene, none of them had their swords, and there weren't a lot of Elementals present. Those couldn't help as they were locked under the shield. He hadn't glanced at the other people in the room since the beginning of the fight. They weren't in immediate danger, which wasn't his case.

Distracted, he missed one of the orcs striking at him and dodged a little too late, a hot pain shot from his side. Gritting his teeth, he



ignored it hand properly took the head off the shoulders of the offending beast who had dared to do this stunt.

“Elders, if you’re listening... Make this end soon!”

--

Opheria, Kobalt and Celen literally cut their way to the stage. They found Djaryle there, Najira still out of cold.

“How can she stay like this?” exclaimed Opheria.

“I placed a spell on her,” said Djaryle.

Celen nodded.

“Alright we need to break this stone. Me and Kobalt will attack him to distract him Opheria, you and Djaryle you will be able to destroy the stone.”

Kobalt shook his head.

“No Celen, you won’t strike your father... I won’t let you do this... Opheria and me will distract him and you and Djaryle will took care of the stone.”

“But!... he’s not my father anymore!”

“He might not be your father anymore but he had been for years, you can’t fall as low as him...” said Opheria, placing a hand on his arm.

“Alright, but we should hurry, the others looked like they would appreciate a break.” He handed his sword to Opheria since she had lent hers to Demenor.

They parted in two groups. Opheria and Kobalt walked to the King, wit a confident face while Celen and Djaryle walked to the chair from behind.

“Djaryle do you have a dagger?”



Celen felt stupid saying this, but he didn't have any weapons with him. He knew that Harry and Teneb were always carrying some and found them a bit paranoid... He vowed to himself to always carry a blade with him from this moment.

"You don't have one?!"

Djaryle's tone was disbelieving.

He shook his head and she sighed at this.

"I wonder what your security's chief was thinking... She bent down and raised the hem of her dress, showing some of her legs. She pulled out a long and thin dagger.

"This will do?"

"Perfect... But do you always carry a dagger on you?"

"It's for me to know and you to guess," replied Djaryle.

Looking up, Celen saw that Opheria and Kobalt was slowly maneuvering to take the King far away enough of the chair to give Celen and Djaryle enough time to destroy the stone without his interfering.

Suddenly Celen saw an opening, His father wasn't looking at the chair. He sprang up, ran to the chair, ignoring the cry of his father. He jumped on the chair and planted the dagger straight in the stone after having cast a strengthening spell on the blade to be sure it would shatter the stone.

As he felt the stone crack, he was hit in the back and blasted away. But a smile was firmly etched on his face, the stone was going to completely crack in a few seconds, he had struck in its center. He hit a wall and felt himself fall in blissful unconsciousness. Before fainting, he saw the face of a little beast above him, ax raised, but he couldn't move.

He was going to die.



But he didn't regret anything.

He heard a cry and everything went black.

--

Harry was feeling that his body was getting tired as he barely avoided one of the fire blades of the demon all the while slitting a creature open right in its middle.

He heard a shatter and his body turned to the origin of the sound. He saw the stone of chair shattered as Celen flew straight in a wall.

The Demon screamed as the portal he had came from transformed in a vortex. The vortex started aspiring the little creatures, well the ones still standing. The Demon was fighting it, refusing to return to his World. Inexorably he was sucked back by the Vortex.

/YOU!/

He turned to the King.

/It's your fault!/

With one his hands, he caught the King. The elf writhed in his hand, trying to free himself.

/I didn't get my reward... and if I'm going back, you're going with me.../

Enrys started to look around, pleading for someone to help him.

Harry and Teneb, still possessed by the Powers raised their hands.

"This is our judgment, in the name of Solyen and Lunai, by the Powers themselves, we strip you of all powers and condemn you to an eternity of Darkness in the World of Shadows. So witnessed..."

They heard the former King fearful cry.

"NO!"



“...So decreed!”

The Demon's face twisted in a demoniac smile as he was happed by the vortex, Enrys still in his hand, screaming.

Once the Vortex closed itself the portal disappeared. Harry fell on his ground, as he felt the Power which had been controlling him leave. It hurt a lot more than the first time. He felt himself be swept away but resisted, he had still a lot to do, no matter how tired he was.

He felt an approving feeling come of the power as it left and he thanked it for its help.

He slumped on the ground to tired to stand up and felt Teneb do the same near him before exhaustion claimed him.

--

Demenor had seen Celen shatter the stone even if he hadn't know why at first, as the young prince was blasted away, he heard the scream of the Demon and understood. He felt relief flood back to him. He wouldn't have been able to hold up for more longer. In the corner of his eyes he saw a creature approached Celen as the youth was done and raised its ax.

He screamed but the heir seemed to be unconscious and he was too far to do anything. With horror he waited to see the ax hit the prince but nothing came and the creature fell on its side. He then saw a knife firmly embedded in the back of its head.

Looking around, he saw Djaryle, her hand raised, leaning on the chair. He breathed out. Thanks the Powers.

He looked as the Demon was happed back to his world and that the two Athars delivered their judgment, condemning Enrys to an eternity of torture. He saw them fell on the floor as the Powers left them and prayed that they wouldn't lose themselves. Glancing at Doryan, he saw that the High Counselor didn't look too bad. He had a few deep cuts but noting life-threatening, He himself sported several gashes and only hoped that the blades weren't poisoned.



Opheria and Kobalt were sitting on the floor apparently exhausted.

The Xhan and the Xhana exited their trance and Demenor felt the shield disappear.

“Your riders did good, Demenor, but something is blocking the Dragons from entering...,” said the Xhana.

Scanning the room, his senses a bit blurry, he somehow sensed wards.

“...wards... strange...”

The two priests exchanged a look and each of them placed a hand on a wall, invoking the powers of their gods to take the wards down.

Demenor felt a shimmering around him. And immediately the Elders plus a few others dragons, all in human forms popped in the room. Those bonded approached their exhausted partners and started to heal them.

Suddenly Demenor felt a link he had sensed had been severed this very morning formed back. He looked up, hope in his eyes.

Next to him stood an Azurean in human form.

“Ul-Ulras?”

°Yes, my bonded, you proved yourself tonight by acting like a true rider would. The probation over you is lifted, but all the riders will have to prove themselves, and the other punishments won’t be lifted, except if the culprits experienced a true change of heart.°

Demenor could only nod, overjoyed at having his dragon back at his side.

I trust you learned the lesson This time it was said mentally.

Demenor nodded and felt his injuries heal and his exhaustion fade away.

“Thank you Ulras, for everything.”



No need

Demenor took a good look around.

Djaryle was at Celen's side, Opheria, Teneb, Kobalt and Harry were being tend to by their own Dragons. The other Elders were currently making the carcasses of the dead creatures disappear, as well as cleaning the grounds and wall of the bloods and other things which had been spread during the fight.

Harry stood up and extended his hand to Teneb who took it. Once they were standing, they exchanged a few words with their bonded.

The woman dressed in silver who was Teneb's bonded approached Doryan and a few seconds later, any trace of the fight had disappear from the High Counselor's body. Smiling a bit at Demenor, the woman made her way to the prince and Djaryle, Teneb and Harry at their side.

She healed and reenergized the two youths and Harry extended his hand to the prince.

Demenor smiled as the heir of Horevald took the hand offered.

The four of them were joined by Kobalt and Opheria.

Demenor looked to the people which had been protected under the shield. Many had fainted, some were in shock. Some were huddled in a corner, sobbing, others seemed hysterical. The riders which had been present were in shock as they starred at the youths.

Demenor could understand them. The six of them had shown great courage and strength tonight.

"Doryan, go to them, talk with Valera, we need to reorganize this mess."

The elf seemed to be jolted out of his thoughts.

"You're right, Demenor. And we have a lot to do... There're going to be a lot of changes here."



Demenor nodded.

“Ask your wife to come. Ylesa will be a good support for Valera, and she’s going to need it. But she can count on mine.”

Doryan nodded.

“And on mine.”

With that he walked to the Queen.

Valera was walking towards her son, but Doryan intercepted her and they started to talk.

Surprise passed on her features, then determination and she nodded.

Meanwhile Demenor walked to the adult riders, motioning to them to gather. In the corner of his eyes, he spotted Inir, Arnelle and Malisa huddled together, trembling. He’d have to talk to them later, but for now he had other things to care of.

“I want half of you to go check the castle from attic to dungeons... Look for anything which might be off, enroll the guards’ help for this search. Those who had their powers reduced will stay here and help the people in this room to recover.”

“But... that’s healers’ jobs! We don’t have to do such jobs!”

This time Demenor saw red. He was conscious that not even three days ago he would have probably agree with this rider, but much had happened in three days and his views of the world had been completely transformed.

“We’re RIDERS! It’s our job to help and protect in ANY way possible. Be it by fighting or comforting, or even giving food! Don’t you forget what your task is!”

The rider cowered before his leader.

“You know my orders, now get moving. These people need our help.”

The riders stood petrified, gaping at their leader.



“Didn’t you hear what I said!” yelled Demenor.

This had them moving. All those with reduced powers stayed, while the others scattered out of the room.

Demenor turned to look at the youth and saw Harry looking at him strangely. He nodded at him and was surprised to be acknowledged with a small tilt of the head.

You learned your lesson well, my bonded, came the voice of his Dragon.

Maybe there was hope for the future.

--

Harry looked around, they needed to organize everything or they would have anarchy on their hands once the main leaders gathered their wits.

“Celen, you and your mother need to show your authority or you’re going to have a civil war on your hands.”

The prince nodded and turned to his mother who was currently looking at him. She motioned to the throne and he nodded.

“We need to get this done, now!” urged Harry, seeing Ulthon starting to speak with other people.

They walked on the stage. Casting a Sonorus charm on them, Harry turned to the people looking at them expectantly.

“As Athars, we pronounced our sentence. To preserve the stability and balance of the land, we name Valera Ryll Vyriannight regent of Horevald’s crown until her son, Celen...”

“... Soryan Ikerstorm-Vyriannight reached the rightful age to be crowned.” Finished Teneb. “So witnessed, so decreed.”

No protestation was uttered, but Harry wasn’t fooled. He had noticed the sullen faces of some of the court men.



He ended the charm and left the stage to Valera and Celen.

The Queen held herself proudly, showing her true colors.

“I, Valera Ryll Vyrinnight, accept the charge of Regent until the coming of age of my son.”

“I, Celen Soryan Irkstorm-Vyriannight recognized my mother, Valera Ryll Vyriannight as Regent of Horevald until my coronation.”

Once this was done, Valera looked around the room.

“Herald, fetch several healers to tend to the people in this room. I want the council to gather in an hour in the Green room. We have several issues to discuss. Doryan, I want you to warn the scholars and have them sent representatives to this council, I also want the elders of the Magis and the Leaders of the Elementals’ clans present. Messages must be sent to the different magic schools for people to be sent there for advise. Messengers must leave as soon as possible to warn the other islands and ask the high dukes to send representatives too.”

Happy to have clear orders, the heralds went out of the room as healers entered.

Taking in the state of the people present, they immediately set to work.

Meanwhile the riders had approached the Elders.

°You did well today, ° said Gae.

° Yes,° added Phaist, °I liked the fire... nice color...° He said, smiling at Harry.

° We will stay here for the night, in case a new problem arise.° said Cehra.

“Rexeran?” asked Harry, “Would you and your peers mind erecting wards around the castle. I don’t trust those actually in place.”



The Elders nodded.

° It will be our pleasure. Regent, we'd like to be present to your council °

Harry heard distinctly Rexeran's groan as Gae said that.

I really hope they'll make it quick, I loath this form... so fragile...

Harry hid his smile, even in their human forms, the dragons couldn't be described as fragile, but he had to admit that now matter how brilliant their human appearance were, there was still an unease about them, the feeling that it wasn't their true nature.

Valera nodded sharply.

At this moment, a guard approached them.

"Regent? We were ordered to check the castles for any abnormalities. There is a room we can't open in the King's office."

Valera sent a look at Doryan who nodded.

"I'll come, but I'd appreciate it if the Athars could come."

Harry and Teneb agreed, before turning to Opheria and Kobalt.

"Could you go outside and check everything too?" the two riders nodded and left.

Teneb looked at Djaryle.

"Dja, could you help Celen," He added much lower, so that she was the only one able to hear it "I think he is going to be approached by several people and if you could help him deal with them, we'd be grateful."

She looked at him a far away glint in her eyes then agreed quickly and went to Celen's side, starting to talk to him.

Before leaving the room with Doryan, Harry turned to Valera.



“Regent?”

“Yes?”

“Could someone take care of Najira? She must still be unconscious. Someone would have to bring her to her room.”

Valera sighed at the mention of her step-daughter.

“What am I going to do with her...”

“Don’t worry about that, I’ll be taking her with me and left her in the care of people who’ll know how to teach her to control her powers.”

“Thank you.”

Nodding Harry left the room.

They walked up a few staircases, turned a bit before stopping before a door. Entering the room, they found themselves in an office. Two soldiers were guarding a door on the left.

“This is the door, Lord Doryan,” said the guards.

“Athars?”

Doryan saw the dubious faces of the guards but ignored them.

Harry and Teneb walked to the door and immediately sensed several layer of wards on it, plus a few spells to attack whoever should try to break them without the password.

Harry whistled.

“I’ve never seen so many wards placed together before,” said Teneb, “It’s going to take ages to take them down, isn’t it?” He turned to Harry.

“What do you think?”

Harry bit his low lip.



“Well, I could blast it, but there’s a living something in the room behind it and I don’t want to take the risk to hit him while blasting it open. The attacks’ spells will be easy to take care of, it’s the wards which are tricky. They seemed to be interconnected.... Powering each other...”

“... From a common origin, so if we find it...”

“No more wards.”

They started to scan the room to no avail...

“Alright, there’s nothing in this room which seems remotely connected to these damn wards.”

Harry was scanning the wards again, looking for a weakness... Finding none, he disabled the attack’s spells and followed the stream of energy of the wards.

The different layers were connected so if he tried to break one by one, the energy of the broken one would go to all the others and in the end he would have an unbreakable charm. He couldn’t drain them either, there were too much power in them, he would only fry himself.

“Blast it!” he said, looking venomously at the offending door. “Any luck Teneb?”

“Nothing...”

“I’m going to have to blast it... If only I could make sure not to hit the people behind...”

Suddenly he had an idea.

“Everybody leave the room, and if there is things here you don’t want to risk being destroyed, take them out.” he said in a tone that left no place for discussion. He was obeyed. It took them ten minutes to empty the room of anything that might be useful. Then he closed the door and started to seal the room completely.



“Teneb, I want you to empty this room of its air, as completely as possible.”

A bit bewildered at the demand, Teneb did as he was told. “Done, and now?”

“Take a few steps back and bring your shields up.”

He didn’t have to repeat himself. Even the guards obeyed him without asking.

Concentrating on his element, he willed the flames to blast the door. He couldn’t burn it slowly, the wards were protecting it, so the only way to do it was to flood it with so much power that it would break. As there was no air left in the room, he knew the power would gather until the...

BAM!

...explosion.

“Teneb, air, now.”

A few seconds later, Teneb nodded and they all stepped in the room.

The office was a complete mess, a real carnage, but his idea had worked. Emptying the room of its air had created a huge difference of pressure between the office and the hidden room. When the door had been blasted, air had immediately went from the secret room to the office to equilibrate the pressures. The flow of air had prevented the shards and bits of the door to enter too far into the secret room. It was simple physics, and Harry would never be grateful enough to the documentary Dudley had been forced to watch for a school essay. As the Dursleys thought it would bore him to death they had made him watch it. It had been interesting even if he hadn’t understood half of it. But this law had marked him, as there had been an experiment shown to explain it...

“Good thinking Harry, I don’t understand how you managed it, but good thinking.”



*It's called brains, my dear Teneb.*

*Be careful with the door, your head might get stuck in it...*

Harry rolled his eyes as he stepped in the room. It was dimly lightened. The room was spare but nothing worse than Harry had to live in at the Dursleys: There were a bed, a table, with some dishes on them, two chairs, a desk, a few shelves on the walls, covered with books. The desk was disappearing under all the parchments piled on it, most of them covered with spidery writing. A thick book was opened on the table. A door on the right seemed to be leading to a bathroom. Harry quickly took in the surroundings as his eyes got used to the light. A moan alerted them and he made out a huddled form in a corner of the room. Walking quickly to it, he noticed that the person seemed to be in great pain. He laid her on his back and strengthened the lights to have a better view of the face of this person.

He nearly had a heart attack.

This person was the quasi identical replica of Enrys.

--

Harry heard Teneb muffled a cry of surprise, something, neither Doryan nor the guards did.

"It's Reald..." whispered Doryan, "I... We all thought him dead..."

"He will be dead in few minutes if I don't find what's wrong with him!," snapped Harry, monitoring the elf withering on the floor. "Something is draining his magic and life-energy, but he isn't injured... Who is he?"

"It's Enrys' twin," answered Teneb.

At this Harry looked up.

"His... twin? Are you sure?"

"Yes, there's no doubt."



“Alright, then I need you to hold him still, I’m going to sever his twin bond. It will hurt a lot...You need to restrain him or he’ll try to scratch his head open.”

Teneb nodded.

“Are you sure it’s...”

“Teneb, We sent Enrys to the Shadow world, not completely willingly, but we did. He is draining his twin to sustain himself a bit longer. A few more minutes and this... whoever won’t have a bit of power left!”

“Alright, do what you have to do.” Teneb’s face was set as he put his weight on the man.

“Hold on.”

Harry entered a trance and sent his mind in this man’s being. He started to look for the bond and found it easily. It was a dark color and pumping on the magic of the elf. Harry’s mental self was repulsed at this sight. There was no doubt that this was bonding this man to the Shadow World.

Sharpening his mind, he gathered his own magic and created a mental blade of power. He strengthened it the best he could then started to cut the bond at a place where it wasn’t corrupted by the Shadows’ energies. Little by little, strand after strands, with delicate movements, like a surgeon, he extracted the bond. The dark thread, pulsating threateningly, started to look for another source to feed on; but Harry warded himself and the mind of the elf. Finding nothing, the thread started to disintegrate... And soon there was nothing left of it. Harry let down the wards and looked at the area he had worked on. The cut was clean and the magic of the man would center itself again to compensate the loss of this bond.

He exited his trance. And found that the three guards and Doryan had been helping Teneb to hold the man down.

“What did you do?! You had him screaming and convulsing for five minutes!” snapped Teneb.



Harry sighed, he didn't want to argue with Teneb.

"I severed his bond with his twin. You know how painful it is, and you know I had to do it slowly or I could have cause great harm to his magic. He'll be weak for a week, but he won't suffer after effects."

Teneb starred at his Blood brother.

"Alright, but it was disturbing... He was screaming as if you were torturing him."

"It's torture for him, in a way. His twin bond his an intricate part of himself, by cutting it I took away a part of himself... But the alternative would have been far worse, believe me..."

He stood up.

"Who did you say he is?"

An raspy voice answered him.

"I'm Reald."

--

An hour later, Reald was sitting on a bed, sipping on a hot tea mug.

"So what happened?" asked Teneb.

Harry was sitting in a chair in a corner of the room, wary of this man, after he was the King's twin.

Doryan was sitting with Valera and Ylesa who had just arrived on one side of the bed. Celen, Demenor, Djaryle who was sitting near the prince, the Elders, Opheria and Kobalt either standing or sitting around in the room.

Celen was eyeing the man warily. He had heard stories about his father lost twin, his "uncle Reald" who had disappeared before his birth.



“Well, Enrys and me had found a box full of old manuscripts in an abandoned room of the castle. Enrys was fascinated with two of them,” he pointed to the thick book on the table near his bed. “This one is called “The Book of the Prophecies” written by an ancient Seer. He gathered a great number of prophecies and classed them, gathering them by themes. Some were already accomplished; others were announcing events to come. Enrys was fascinated by those speaking of the Dragon. He was nearly obsessed with one of them in particular... Could you give me the book?”

Opheria handed him the thick volume.

“Here, it’s saying this:

*The Basilik will rise again*

*Bringing with him the rise of the Necromancer*

*The Old Dragon will take his flight with the newborn on his wing*

*The Necromancer will strike*

*The Dragon will fight*

*Should he submit*

*Powers would befall the Necromancer*

*Powers like never before.*

“I haven’t been able to translate the rest yet. Enrys was obsessed with this necromancer business. He had always wanted to have powers, no matter what kind and it had been a sore blow to him to know that I had been the one who had inherited most of our parents’ magical abilities.”

Reald’s face was sad as he thought about his lost brother.

“But he was the heir, and I didn’t envy him for that, I had and still have no desire to be King,” he turned to his sister-in-law, “so, Valera,



don't worry about me contesting your rights, I had and have my books and Enrys had the kingdom; I thought it would be enough for him."

Reald paused.

"He started to read about Necromancers, trying to guess who this character could be, and here came his second obsession. He fell upon a book, a sort of guide to turn you into a Necromancer. But he couldn't perform the simplest conjuration. He had simply not enough power to do so. However he kept on reading the manuscript, learning its every word by heart. I didn't think much of it. I continued my studies of the other books we had found. One in particular spoke of way to enchant object to nullified magic, or drain it. It was fascinating. I didn't know that he had also been reading them..."

His expression grew sad again.

"One day he came to see me, offering me this torque and these armbands." He pointed to said objects, laying on the table too. "How he managed to obtain them, I'll never know. I trusted him and put them on without second thoughts. The moment I clasped the torque, the clasps disappeared, preventing me from taking them off . I then sensed my magic leaving me."

"He stole your magic?" cried Doryan, revolted by the very idea.

"In a way... Since then and for the past sixteen years, he had me locked in this room, working for him on the book of Prophecies and on all the Necromantic volumes he could find."

"But how could he find enough power to summon a third rank Demon?" asked Harry. "Such a summon requires a formidable amount of Dark energies..."

"You are well informed..." Reald sent him a suspicious look "He used the dark emotions of his court: the envy, the betrayals, the jealousies, the resentment, he even tried to enhance them. He had placed a focus stone in the throne room and several smaller ones in different parts of the castle."

"Ingenious," said Harry, thinking.



“Perhaps, but the gathering of energy was a bit slow... he didn’t do a lot of major summoning, I don’t think he did one before the one he did tonight. So his reserve was nearly intact...”

“And as it was dark Energies, we couldn’t sense them, unless we were looking specifically for them,” finished Harry.

“Yes. I think that’s all.” Reald took a sip of his tea, sending wary glances to Harry who seemed oblivious to this.

Valera took his hand.

“Well, Reald, it’s good to see you again.”

Reald smiled at his sister in law.

“It’s good to be back!”

--

Valera, Doryan, the Elders, Demenor, Celen and Teneb as future high counselor, had to leave for the council. Before leaving, Celen extracted the promise from Harry to leave only in the morning. He told the wizard that it wouldn’t change anything if he arrived in the morning or in the dead of the night. Moreover, Rexeran had to assist to the council. Before both his dragon, Teneb and Celen stubbornness, Harry complied, albeit extremely reluctantly, Harry wandered in the castle, with Operia, Kobalt and Djaryle to take out all the small focus stone.

It took them a long time to find them all and they were deactivating the main one in the throne room, well, Opheria being a Magis and more in tune with Magic, was disabling it, Kobalt and Harry providing her with energy while Djaryle was monitoring them. Her monitoring was different, not like Teneb’s, Harry couldn’t say how, but it was... The bang of the door opening had them jumping in surprise, and Opheria nearly lost her grip on the stone. She went back to the task at hand, proceeding with extreme care, knowing that the slightest mistake wouldn’t have nice consequences to use an euphemism, even if the stone was emptied to her three-fourth.



Finally she cut the last connection and the stone fell from the chair, straight in a bag where they had been placing all of them.

“Done,” she said, wiping the sweat of her forehead. She turned to those who had entered and saw that Teneb and Celen were sitting at a table, apparently arguing. An annoyed look passed on her features. She walked to them, Kobalt grinning, Djaryle with a far away smile, Harry’s face supporting a small smirk.

Arriving near them she took one of their ear and tugged on it, drawing pained cries from the two youths.

“What. Did. You. Think. You. Were. Doing?” she punctuated each of her words by tugs on their ears. “Really, barging in here like this when you knew we were working on the stones?”

“Aie! We’re sorry... ouch! We’re sorry!”

She twisted their ears a bit.

“I didn’t hear anything?”

“We’re sorry!” chorused the two boys.

“You should be,” she replied, letting go of their ears. “So what’s the problem?”

Celen pointed to Teneb.

“He wants to go with Harry when I need him here at least long enough for things to calm down a bit,” said Celen.

“But I want to go with Harry, he’ll need me!”

By then, Harry had approached the two arguing friends.

“Celen, what did the council decided?”

“Not a lot, it was mainly an assessment of everything. My mother had to deal with a few court men which were contesting her right to be Regent, but the Elders shut him up nicely, at least for the time being.”



They gave the poor man the tongue lashing of the century...

Arxeren! How are you?

Better, thank you... Sorry I couldn't be with you with this Demon, but your outburst had hit me and Kaelia more than I thought, and They had us resting again for several hours...

Who are They? You mentioned them several times already...

Now, Harry, you're not supposed to know this.

Harry said nothing, knowing that when Arxeren was serious, he had to agree to what the guardian was saying.

He exchanged a few words with his guardian, while listening to Celen's sum up of the council. After the tongue lashing, Valera had summed up everything.

Then they had been discussing the matter of Voldemort's ritual and their involvement, into this fight.

It was decided that several scholars would be sent to the human world with the punished riders. Depending on their report, they would decide if they would or not join actively in the fight. The Magis had been resigned to help the humans, at least those present at the Council, the Elementals had agreed quite easily. Teneb thought it was because they wanted to see if other humans were element-gifted.

Sure there had been rants about it, more of them coming from Aldyrs, but in the end, they had agreed to try to close the rift with humans.

Harry snorted.

"As if they had a choice, the Elders were quite precise in their commands."

"Indeed..."

Harry turned to Teneb.

"Teneb, you must stay here, at least for awhile."



Teneb seemed about to argue.

“Stay at least here a couple of days. Protect Celen. I think he’ll be targeted in the days to come... You’re his future High counselor, you must enforce this idea in the heads of the courtiers that you won’t let anything happen to him. It will also give me time to prepare your arrival in my worlds. I don’t want you to be stunned on sight the second you set foot on Hogwarts’ ground. Once the situation will have settled from this chaos to a nice mess, you can come, if you still want. Remember this, I’m not forcing you to come, you’re not obligated to do so. I don’t want you to put yourself in harm’s way. If you want, you can come with me in the morning, I’ll introduce you so that if you were to come to see me unexpectedly you wouldn’t find yourself at wand point.”

Teneb looked at his friend.

“Alright, I’ll go with you tomorrow and come back here once the introductions will be done. The masters, scholars and Najira will arrive in your world in five days, I’ll come with them then.”

“Teneb...”

“No Celen... I’ll go anyway... I’ll stay here for five days, then I’ll leave. If you need me, you can call me and I’ll do anything to be there in time for you, but I need to go.”

“I know this...” The prince turned to Harry. “You have my support and I’ll do all the things in my power to knock some sense in my people, but don’t count too much on us, I’ll try sending you the Elit, once I’m sure of their integrity and allegiances... There are going to be a lot of change here... But attitudes won’t change overnight, even if ours did, we all had good pushes in the right direction... However the majority of people don’t like humans and this won’t change like this” he snapped his fingers “Mother and I will do our best to make them see reason, but don’t expect miracles.”

Harry smiled at him.



“It’s already more than what I expected.” He thought for a bit. “Is there a way we can contact each other... I’d like to be warned of the arrival of the masters and the others...”

“Easy, take that,” he threw Harry a small stone. “It’ll buzz if someone wants to talk to you. Say Odal to accept the communication and Acta to stop it.”

“Thanks.”

Harry looked around.

“Well, I think we’re done, we should go sleep for awhile.”

The others nodded and parted.

Celen showed Harry a room where he could sleep for the night.

With a yawn, he summoned his bag, where he had shrunk and packed everything he possessed as he didn’t intended to go back to the Headquarters.

As he took off his clothes and folded them carefully, placing his blades aside, cleaning and sharpening them. Terio would kill him if he went to sleep without making sure his blades were spotless. The thought of Terio made him look at the medallion Terio had given him. He hadn’t been wearing it today as it would have drawn to many question. As soon as it had it around his neck, the medallion opened and Terio’s voice boomed in the room.

“At least! You’re putting the thing on! I’ve been trying to talk to you for hours! Why weren’t you wearing it!”

Harry chuckled.

“Hi Terio, well it would have looked a bit too suspicious this morning for the induction, and so much happened then that I forgot to put it back...”



“What happened, the dwarfs living under Horevald or nearby have reported huge disturbances in the energies around! What did you do?”

Harry gave his small friend a brief sum up of the situation.

“Alright, so you basically shocked them to death, nearly killed them all, banished their King, disturbed all their pretty little ideas and to sum up turned their world upside down.”

“Basically,” replied Harry.

“Excellent! Great job, boy! We’ve been waiting for a long time to have someone knock some sense in their arrogant, do-gooder, thick skull of leaves-eaters. I hope you rubbed their noses in it...”

Harry laughed at this.

“Happy to see you find a good side of his mess, but I admit that they needed a wake up call to reality. But Celen and Valera seem alright to me. Celen had his eyes opened, a bit brutally I admit to reality and Valera is from Ynris”

“The less stuck up of the lot... You’ll have to bring this Celen fellow to me so I can see if how bad he is for a Elfish do-gooder. Oh! And bring Teneb too, I have thought of new ones!”

Harry barely suppressed a snort at this. After a few weeks, both Teneb and Terio had started a little contest of insults. So far Terio had been winning...

“I’ll be sure to tell him...” Harry yawned.

“You should rest Harry,”

“Yeah, I’ll call you later Terio. Health and Wealth.”

“Health and Wealth Harry, take care.”

“I will, you too.”

The flame of Sardogh flew back to the medallion.



Smiling, Harry went, setting up an alarm spell to wake him five hours later.

--

He woke up, a bit sore and started to get dressed, putting on more casual clothes: Brown pants with a green shirt. Once he was dressed, he packed his ceremonial clothes and strapped his blades and darts at their usual places. He had got used to their presence and was feeling naked without them.

He took his bag, and walked to the door, his sword balancing at his side. It had taken him time to get used to walk with the blade at his hips, but now he missed it if he had to leave it behind.

Opening the door, he stepped in the corridor and headed towards the dining room, where he knew someone would be able to give him something to eat.

Upon entering, he spotted Teneb and Celen eating and speaking. Valera, Reald, Doryan and Demenor were also present.

He sat near his friend and helped him with some bread and fruits.

“So, Teneb, what are you doing?”

“Me, Demenor, one of the Elders of the Magis, don’t worry he is quite alright, and Celen will come with you to your school. We’ll stay until explanations are given then we’ll leave. I’ll come back with the masters in five days.”

Harry choked on his bread.

“What?! Who is coming?”

Teneb smirked at him.

“Demenor is coming to explain your disappearance and the current situation, The Magis, Halan, is coming to evaluate the situation from a magical point of view. I’m coming no matter what and Celen will come to have a look at the general situation.”



Harry starred at him.

“Al-Alright...” he composed himself, and seeing the amused looks of those seated around, decided to have his revenge.

“Teneb, I spoke with Terio last night, he asked me to tell you to go visit him when you’ll have time, he told me he had found new ones...”

Teneb perked up at this.

“Really, I have a few to give him myself...”

Harry finished eating his apple, and noticed the curious look they were receiving.

“Well, we should go...Valera,” he bowed at her, “Doryan, give my respect to Ylesa and Delia,” he bowed his head at the High counselor. Teneb followed them. Just as he was about to pass the door, Celen couldn’t stop himself.

“Who is Terio?”

Harry turned and answered with a smirk.

“A dwarf”

Several chokes were heard at this as he passed the door.

Teneb and him went outside, and immediately spotted Rexeran and Gae, this time in their true form.

Harry went to the Sowaroc and leaned on him, relishing the feeling of acceptance radiating from the Elder.

“Good morning Rexeran.”

Good morning, Astyan. Are you ready?

“Nearly, I just have to go check on my horse,”

Go then, we’ll leave soon.



Harry was regretting to have to leave Shadow here until a portal could be build between the castle and Hogwarts. He had asked Doryan to go to the temple and have Eryn take care of the stallion. He was looking forwards mounting his stallion again. On the other hand, he was taking Lucky with him. The little fox was currently in the stables. He want there and after much petting, he walked away, Lucky secured in his second bag.

As he reached the others, they were getting ready. Ulras, Demenor's dragon was also here. The Magis was going to ride with Demenor and Celen with Teneb.

Five minutes later they were ready and the Dragon sprung in the air. Once they were high enough, Harry gave them a picture of Hogwarts, just above the Quidditch pitch where he knew the Dragon would be able to land. He really hoped that no Quidditch team was practicing... if Quidditch hadn't been suppressed... He felt his mind merge with the mind of the Sowaroc and suddenly he felt himself be swept away on the wings of Dragon's power, Jumping to Hogwarts.

--

The Ravenclaw Quidditch team had been practicing. The headmaster had thought that allowing the students to play this sport would be a nice distraction for them. The Pitch was heavily warded of course and a teacher was always present; in general, it was Professor Hooch, but sometimes, another would be watching over the team playing. The students of Beauxbâtons and Durmstrang, though integrated to the four houses of Hogwarts had formed teams on their own, thus making the number of teams running for the cup six, instead of the usual four. The last match, between Ravenclaw and the Durmstrang's students would be held just after the OWLs. These two teams were the two running for the cup. Gryffondor having lost its seeker, the team hadn't done great, Hufflepuff hadn't been better. Slytherin had played the Beauxbâtons' students and had won, ensuring their house the third place.

Cho Chang was the captain of the team and had her players practicing a move involving the beaters and the chasers. If used well, he could be a good move: a feint, followed by a beater attack and



finally a last trick to confuse the keeper. She was so concentrated on the game that at first she didn't noticed the three forms that had popped up just above the pitch.

A sudden shadow had her looking up and barely kept herself from screaming.

Three huge dragons were flying in circles above the pitch she didn't try to get a better view of them. She remembered the security measures that had been drilled in their head for the past months.

Immediately she yelled at her teammates to get down.

Soon they were running to the castle, Professor Hooch behind them. They went straight to the Hall where the rest of the students were eating. Upon seeing the whole Ravenclaw team running as if they were chased by demons, and Professor Hooch looking shaken, the students shushed.

"Albus! Quidditch Pitch... Dragons...."

Immediately the other teachers were up and Dumbledore was ordering everyone around.

"First to third years go to your dorms with the fourth years who will be responsible of the lower years. Fifth year and above with the teachers."

Immediately they started to move in an ordered fashion, having gone over this quite a few times for exercises.

Hermione and Ron were up and followed the teachers out with the rest of their years and the sixth and seventh. Five professors as well as some students which had been chosen before remained in the school. Several students which had been found gifted with healing went straight to infirmary.

Soon they arrived at the pitch and had their breath taken away. Three huge Dragons were standing on the pitch, looking around. Five people, two adults and three younger ones were standing near them,



talking. They looked at them as they walked closer. None of the strangers made a move to attack them.

If this was a new trick of Voldemort he was getting way better at it... thought Hermione. She had been placed under constant watch since the Dark Lord seemed to have ordered her to be taken out, three days ago...

Now that she was closer she thought that one of them was definitively familiar, the four others were strange. All of them had odd looking clothes and swords hanging at their sides, except for the one with white hair.

One of the youth, the familiar one with black hair smiled at them.

"It's good to be back... but I wasn't expecting such a welcome..."

Even the voice was familiar...

Dumbledore and the Professors lowered their wands a little.

"Do we know you?" finally asked the headmaster, finally judging that none of them were posing an immediate threat to the school.

The youth looked sad at this.

You changed a lot since you were taken away said a voice. The teachers looked around trying to find the speaker.

"You're right Rexeran, but I thought..." replied the youth to the... Dragon. The dragon was speaking.

Hermione knew she must be gaping at them, as most of those around her.

Another youth placed a hand on the shoulder of the one who had been speaking.

"He's right, you're not the same Harry that arrived at the headquarters a year ago."

Hermione's brain went into temporary shut down.



Harry

He had been called Harry.

He had arrived wherever he had a year ago.

He had black hair...

Harry...

Sighing the youth turned to the professors.

"I never thought I'd be grateful for this scar one day..."

He pushed his hair aside, revealing the famous scar.

Harry was back....

"HARRY POTTER! YOU...!" yelled Hermione, running to her friend and hugging him fiercely. She knew Ron was close behind her as he hugged them both.

After a minutes of pure confusion. A cough brought Hermione to reality.

"Miss Granger, Mr Weasley, as much as I know you're happy to have Mr Potter back, I think he's in great need of oxygen" the amused voice of the headmaster rang in the Pitch.

Embarrassed at her display, Hermione disentangled herself from her two friends and looked at the smiling face of her friend she had not seen for nearly a year and about whom she had been worried sick.

Then she did something that she would always regret, she slapped him, hard.

--

I hope you enjoyed this, well I await your comments on this chapter!



Thanks again for your review, it really helps!

Naia



## **Chapter Twenty-One**

*Embarrassed at her display, Hermione disentangled herself from her two friends and looked at the smiling face of her friend that she had not seen for nearly a year and about whom she had been worried sick.*

*Then she did something that she would always regret, she slapped him, hard.*

--

The sound of flesh hitting flesh echoed on the pitch

Immediately Hermione felt herself go rigid.

The other black haired youth was looking at her, his hand raised, the golden Dragon growling at her. People started to draw their wand but at this moment, a gold aura surrounding the mighty creature and they couldn't move either. Green eyes locked with brown ones. For nearly a minute nobody made a sound, not that anyone could have, watching the little drama unfolding before them.

Harry raised his hand to his face, touching his sore and now reddening cheek. His expression went from incredulous to pained. Then a blank mask fell over his features. He turned around, his cloak billowing and after pausing near the Dragon left towards the Forest.

Everyone's gaze moved to the remaining strangers.

Teneb eyed Hermione coldly.

"That," he nearly spat, "was about the worst thing you could have done."

--



Teneb was fuming.... Humans! So emotional ! How could she have done this!

Harry's grip on his feelings was not strong enough for that kind of blow! He was going to suppress them even more than before, instead of dealing with them....

He restrained his anger at the girl before him. And she was supposed to be the logical one?! Then, if it was true, he didn't want to know what humans deemed temperamental people.

He pushed his white strand of hair out of his face and turned towards the Dragons.

"Rexeran, if you could please release the adults and Harry's two friends..."

Some friends they are... retorted the Elder, but complied nonetheless

As soon as Hermione was freed she fell on her knees, sobbing. Ron knelt near her, his arm around her shoulder, trying to calm her down. Teneb chose not to ponder on their behaviour for now and faced the adults. Then he eyed the wizards who had now their wands drawn on them.

"If you could put those sticks away, it would make the conversation much easier," he said cuttingly, using his past experience at the court to sound as imposing as possible.

The older one, Dumble-something... hmmm Dumbledore was looking at him warily, after a few moments of staring, he lowered his wand and signaled for his companions to do so.

"Good," Teneb didn't waste a moment, he had to take advantage of their unsettled state. "We're going to memory charm them", he pointed to the students which were still immobilized. As Dumbledore was about to protest, Celen spoke up.

"If you think about it, you'll understand our decision. We want to keep our arrival and Harry's return secret for as long as possible and



prevent any rash action from that Dark Lord of yours, but then the decision is yours...”

Dumbledore closed his mouth, looking at Celen in disbelief, stunned to have been chastised by someone who looked about sixteen, seventeen at best. He nodded.

“I see your point, but you must understand that explanations will be in order,” he said, gathering his wits and authority.

Celen merely nodded, acting like the prince he was. “Demenor will explain the events which led to our arrival,” he supplied, as he turned towards the Magis who had been studying the scene, but above all the wizard and the castle, with an evaluating gaze.

“Halan? If you could?”

He nodded, causing the long braid of white hair to bounce on his back. Magis had naturally white hair, due to their close connection with magical energies.

He raised both hands and closed his eyes, chanting lowly, in a trance-like attitude.

Teneb, through his magical sense, could feel a disturbance in the magical flows around, as Halan tapped in their powers.

He then opened his eyes, which were glowing an unnatural orange, pulsing with power.

Teneb felt the power being unleashed and spread over the students, exception made of the adults as well as Hermione and Ron.

He quickly raised a wand, or more exactly a stick of wood Harry had given him to make it look like he was using it. His friend had told him that their wandless magic could be a great asset but had to remain a secret in order to be useful, thus the fake wand; and cast an illusion charm on himself, hiding his elfish features, imitated by his companions who caught on his intentions, while Rexeran, Gae and Ultras turned invisible. He noticed Celen staring at the stick of wood with a puzzled look and sent him a warning glance. He didn't want his



abilities to become public yet. The more Voldemort would underestimate them, the better.

As the students exited their dazed state, they found four people standing on the pitch, surrounded by the headmasters, teachers and Ron and Hermione.

One of the adult stepped forwards.

“We are bringing information and are requiring a private meeting with the people you deem fit.”

Headmaster Dumbledore simply nodded and then ordered everyone to go back inside, telling them that the dragons had been an illusion. Slightly confused they obeyed as the adults ushered them inside.

Only the Headmaster, McGonagall, Flitwick, Sinistra, Jenkins and Durand stayed as their colleagues escorted the students back inside. Ron and Hermione remained at Dumbledore’s side.

Once the coast was clear, the three Dragons turned visible again, but the elves and Magis kept their disguises.

Rexeran turned his head, his rainbow-colored eyes piercing through all of them.

Where can we talk freely?

Dumbledore returned the gaze, quite unsettled by having to talk to a Dragon.

“If you can manage to enter it, the Order’s meeting room will be big enough to fit everyone who needs to be here.”

Demenor stepped forwards.

“This will do, if you can lead the way...” He tilted his head, waiting for them to start to move.

Most of the humans, at least from Teneb’s point of view seemed frozen on spot, even if the charm had been lifted.



“W-What about Harry?” stuttered a voice near him.

Teneb turned and his eyes fell on the distraught girl. He raised an eyebrow.

“I’ll take care of him, but if you could restrain yourself from physical and verbal assault in the future, it would spare me this task.”

At the same time, he was trying to contact Harry through his link.

*Harry? Harry?? Answer me! Harry!*

*No need to yell* From his mental tone, Teneb could tell his friend wasn’t in a good mood.

*We’re going to the Order’s meeting room, wherever and whatever it might be.*

*I’m coming* The reply was short, and Teneb felt their link be cut abruptly.

He felt the elements shift slightly, then sensed his blood brother. Everyone had yet to notice him as he had kept his return quiet. Halan had sensed it, but that was to be expected from a Magis, Demenor had too, but not Celen.

The leader of the riders drew his gaze on Dumbledore.

“If you can show us the way,” this time his tone left no room for stalling.

Dumbledore narrowed his eyes at him, but complied. Suddenly a surprised light entered his eyes, replaced by suspicions.

“Very well, follow me.”

Briskly, he walked towards one of the towers of the castle and, stopping at the base, he placed his hand on one of the bricks and the wall melted to leave a gaping hole.



Motioning them to enter he waited for everyone to have entered the tunnel, then closed the wall behind him. The three Dragons had disappeared as they walked.

Taking the lead, Hogwarts' headmaster strode at a quicker pace than his looks suggested he was capable of.

After a minute, they arrived in front of a carved door. After several of the carved figures had been tapped with Dumbledore's wand, the doors parted, leaving them access to the huge hall behind. During the whole walk, Harry had remained at Teneb's side, Celen on his other, his head held high, his green eyes devoid of any emotions. Every few seconds, Teneb would throw him a worried glance.

As they stepped in the room, Harry was taking those new surroundings in rather quickly, spotting the possible hide out, the potential weapons available and so forth. The hall was as big as the great hall a long table was situated in the middle, apparently hosting the reunions of the Order's council. Other tables were placed against the walls, apparently used for reunions of the entire Order.

The walls were bare hist if you could restraine, except for a large painting of a phoenix in flight. The chairs were simple, save three, which were slightly more ornate, probably for the Order's leader and his seconds. Several maps were hanging from the ceiling, showing the United Kingdom, Europe, the world and a few other countries. Dots of various colors were covering them. Without a sound two lights popped in and started to grow, the two Elders appearing.

Ulras left to have a look at the Dragon colonies around privately said Rexeran.

Nodding slightly, Harry looked at his old professor and at his friends.

Ron had grown. He had started to lose his boyish features, his hair was still a vibrant red and his freckles stood out as much as before. His body was lanky as if he had grown too fast and had yet to fill out. But one thing had changed; Harry couldn't sense the hot-headed personality the red-head had always shown. He was more subdued than he remembered.



Hermione, Harry still felt the sting of her slap. He had expected more of her. He knew his disappearance must have hurt her, but he hadn't thought she would have gone so far as to hit him. She seemed exhausted. The year had taken its toll on her, more visibly than on Ron. She had also grown a bit but got much thinner and started to get some curves. Her hair was still bushy, currently held with a pen in a twist, strands sticking out. She was pale, probably from staying in the Library as much as she could, mused Harry. She was shivering slightly, leaning on Ron.

This held Harry's attention. He looked closely at them, wondering if they started to date. They seemed close, much closer than they had ever been.

Demenor, Teneb, Celen and Halan had taken off their disguise and Dumbledore was eyeing them suspiciously. Shaking his head, he gestured to everyone to take a seat as he went to the painting, tapping it several times while muttering.

He then took his seat, the one designed for the leader.

Harry sat down, Teneb on his left, and Celen on Teneb's left. Rexeran and Gae settled behind their bonded. Demenor and Halan sat next to Celen. For several minutes nobody spoke. The tension in the room was thick and it was a relief when newcomers started to enter.

Harry was quite amused upon seeing their reaction as they saw the two dragons, as well as the five strangers. His gaze swept around the assembly, he recognized his professors, Mrs. Figg... what a surprise, Mad-Eye Moody, Remus. Sirius wasn't here, much to his dismay. Mr. Diggory and Mr. Weasley had just arrived. He didn't see Snape, but that was to be expected. Dumbledore couldn't afford to have him attend meetings as long as his little device was recording everything. A few other people arrived, some of whom Harry recognized, having seen them in his visions. Finally, as the table was filled to the quarter of its capacity, Dumbledore started to introduce the people present, the heads of the Unspeakables, of the surviving Aurors and of the VWF (Voluntary Wizarding Forces).



Harry listened with one ear, attention focused on the people at the table. He'd ask Teneb for the names later.

For once, he realized few people were looking at him, except some of those who knew who he was. Most of them were staring at the Elves and Halan.

He was surprised to hear that Fudge had been removed, well not that surprised, the man had always been a blind stubborn one, but the fact that it was Amos Diggory which had been chosen as Minister was not something he had expected. Zabini's father had apparently left Voldemort's ranks after the murder of his wife at the hand of his former master and was now the vice-Minister. Mr. Weasley was in charged of communications between Wizarding and Muggle governments.

The Headmaster ended the presentations and looked at the newcomers, clearly expecting them to reveal their identities.

Demenor decided to take care of that. He cleared his throat and spoke up.

"On my left is Halan, Elders of the Magis, the young man on my right is Celen Soryan Ikerstorm-Vyriannight, Prince of the Elves."

A few gasps were uttered as Celen tilted his head slightly, the perfect picture of royalty.

"Next to him, is sitting Teneb Ildar Oreansky, Athar and future High counselor of the Prince."

Teneb tilted his head as Celen had done.

"I am Demenor, leader of the riders' Headquarters. Behind Teneb and his neighbor, are standing Gae and Rexeran, Elders of their race and Bonded of respectively Teneb and his companion."

He paused and looked at Harry who simply nodded.



“And this young man is Harry, Athar,” the young dark-haired wizard sighed, as incredulous eyes were drawn to him, pushing his bangs aside, revealing the famous scar.

--

Shouts and whispers started to erupt in the room, but everybody quieted as Dumbledore raised his hand, looking sharply at Demenor, frowning.

“While we are all relieved to see young Harry Potter well and back to us, I’d like to know how he came to end in your care and above all,” there his frown deepened, “why four members of races which heavily discriminated against humans and who cut all links with us, are now here.”

Demenor starred at him while Halan sent him a piercing look.

“So, you are one of their descendants...” said tentatively the riders’ leader.

Dumbledore only nodded, looking at them pointedly, still waiting for an answer.

“We will come to this later, but first, but I think that apologies on our part are due to your people for the Athar’s disappearance.”

Dumbledore was listening to them attentively and gestured for them to continue.

“We never expected a human to be selected as it hasn’t happened for millennia, none having had the raw power needed. A week before the arrival of the candidates to the Headquarters, they are marked. The mark shows their affiliation to the Headquarters and warns their family of their destiny. This way, when the mark activates and acts like a means of direct transportation, the family is not worried about the disappearance of their child. The transportation usually sends the youths unconscious, as they have to pass through the shields on the Island where the Headquarters is built. In Harry’s case, it was worse,



since he had to cross some type of wards and the Veil which keeps our world hidden.”

He paused.

“The candidates, or Daryns as we call them, are forbidden any communication with people off of the Island and our peoples have cut all their contacts with the human world. Once there, they have to stay a year for training, then they bond with a Dragon. Once the bond is completed, the newly inducted riders follow a second year of training.”

Then the old elf took a deep breath, before resuming his little speech.

“And as to our presence here; it came to our attention, that the Dark Lord striking here, is about to use a ritual whose consequences would also affect us, added to the fact that we were ordered to mend the gaps between our peoples as a punishment.”

Dumbledore raised an eyebrow.

“A punishment, indeed...”

Demenor looked down, uncomfortable as the clear blue eyes gazed piercingly at him. There was no doubt in his mind that this ancient wizard descended from the surviving communities of wizards which escaped their revenge. His age and above all his eyes spoke for him. Wizards of old, in particular a small community, had been famed for the power of their looks, the few archives they had of this period credited them with powers of hypnosis.

The headmaster turned to Harry, his gaze softening as he looked at his former student, taking in the changes he had undergone. He was taller, his body more muscled, his face more angular, the white strand of hair was puzzling him a bit, but made Harry look more than his sixteen years. He was holding himself straight and looking every bit the powerful wizard Dumbledore knew Harry would become. But what bothered the aging wizard was the eyes of his former student. Before his disappearance, Harry had worn his emotions on his sleeve, his face a good window of his feelings and moods. But now the face was blank and the eyes weary, a mask of stone, unexpressive. He moved



his gaze towards the elf called Demenor. Explanations were in order, but he didn't want Harry to be there...

"Miss Granger, Mr. Weasley, Mr. Potter, why don't you show the Prince and his companion around the school for a bit, provided they wear some disguise," he suggested, his eyes twinkling slightly.

The two students nodded and looked at Harry, Teneb and Celen expectantly. Celen nodded and stood up gracefully, waving his hand, a charm disguising his elfish features, with Teneb doing the same, decided to at least trust the people in this room with the wandless abilities of his people, since Celen had made his effort to hide it pointless. Harry followed, using his wand though, sending Dumbledore a look to make him know he wasn't fooled but would go with it. He turned to bow at Rexeran.

Give your friends a chance, Astyan; you need their support.

We changed, I realize that now, we are not what we once were and I don't know if we'll be able to pull through this...

Or you can build something different but as strong. You changed that's true, so did they, but underneath those changes you are still the same people... Talk with them before deciding.

Harry sighed. His feelings were a mess, a raging turmoil going through him.

I will... thank you Rexeran.

The five of them exited the room silently, with Ron and Hermione in the lead the three others behind.

Once Dumbledore was sure that they had left, he turned his now stony gaze towards Demenor and Halan.

"Now.... What did you do to Harry?" His voice was cold and his anger pierced through his words.

--



Ron and Hermione led them through several corridors and flight of stairs. They finally reached a wall and started to walk back and forth in front of it.

Puzzled, Harry was about to ask what they were doing when a door appeared. Confused he followed them as they entered, Ron closing and locking the door behind them.

The room was a replica of the Gryffindor common room, the difference being that the colors, instead of crimson and gold were beige and blue. The atmosphere was inviting and comfortable, several armchairs and a couch were forming a half circle before a fireplace, a table in front of them with some food on it.

Without a word, Harry went to an armchair and sat, confused about what to do. Should he wait for them to speak up or should he do the first move? This was not what he had expected. Sure he had known they would be a bit angry, but he had thought they would be happy to see him alive...

Ron and Hermione sat down wearily on the couch, an awkward silence falling on the room.

Finally, seeing they , neither Harry were about to speak first, Teneb decided to break it.

"Where are we?"

Ron looked at him with something akin to relief and gratitude.

"This is the Room of Requirement. Professor Dumbledore let us use it as a gathering room for the Junior Order. The room will change to fit your needs."

Hermione was remaining silent, looking at her hands, not daring to either look at the elves or Harry. Her features were drawn, she was twitching her hands nervously, behaving quite out of character.

Finally, Harry spoke up.



“Ron, what happened while I was away? I know the big events because of my scar, but what happened?”

Harry had wanted to know this, he had to know in what state his world was.

Ron looked his eyes to his and Harry could see the exhaustion and the hopeless feeling in his friend's look.

“It was bad, Harry, Ok, it was really bad”

“Tell me”

Celen and Teneb leaned a bit forwards as they listened to red-head's tale.

--

Hermione was still staring at her twitching hands, an occasional shiver going through her body. Seeing she wasn't about to speak, Ron sighed and raked his hand into his hair.

“What do you want to know, Harry? A lot of things happened, as you surely know....”

Harry nodded.

“I know what I could learn from my vision.... But what happened to you? What happened to Hogwarts?”

“You learned about London's massacre?” Ron didn't wait for him to answer, “lots of students lost some family at that time, and many are now orphans.”

He drew on a shaky breath.

“Then, V-Voldemort went on a killing spree, the Aurors tried to stop him, they attacked his old house...”



He didn't finish his sentence, looking down. "They died... most of them. And those who survived, except for a few lucky ones were sent straight to St Mungo. After that, well, He targeted the most influential Light families, he kidnapped, tortured relatives of the figure head of the opposition."

He paused.

"I guess that Hogwarts is now the biggest threat to him, at least in the British Isles. I heard there was an underground resistance too, but It could be only a rumor. The School is hosting the students from Beauxbâtons, Durmstrang, a few private schools, as well as the Order. The VWF moved out a few days ago in a new unknown base, as well as the Unspeakables..."

Harry shook his hand.

"I knew that, my scar was quite active... But what about Hogwarts?"

Harry's voice was worried. Hogwarts had been his home...

"Hogwarts.... Howgarts is still standing, and always will."

Harry looked at his old friend.

He wasn't the Ron he knew, the temperamental friend he had left last year. This Ron was more controlled and that scared him a bit.

Subconsciously he had expected things to have remained the same, he realized, and seeing his friends now, so different from his memories was crushing this thought.

No, things wouldn't be the same, but he hoped their friendship wouldn't end. He needed them.

He locked eyes with his first friend. Beyond the seriousness of his looks, he could see the repressed fire that had always been part of the Weasley boy.

"Yes, Hogwarts will stand."



A tentative smile appeared on Ron's face, as he held out his hand.

"It's good to have you back, Harry."

Harry took it.

"It's good to be home, Ron".

Things were not fine, but with time, they would be, one way or another. Even if the friendship he had with them would never be the same, they would try to patch things.

Pulling his hand out, he gave meaningful sideway glance to Hermione.

Ron sighed and motioned to him to stand up.

"Hermione, would you mind giving some explanations about the school to Harry's friends? He and I are going to raid the kitchen, we'll be back as soon as possible."

The young woman nodded as Harry and Ron left the room, closing the door behind them.

She turned to have a look at the Elves.

A part of her was excited at facing member of a race no human and seen for centuries, perhaps even millennia, another one wanted to kill them for having taken Harry away. How had they dared to do that. She wanted to shout at them, to interrogate them....

She shook her head. She was a mess, she knew it and this new issue wasn't doing her any good. And Merlin! How could she ever face Harry alone after what she had done! What had possessed her! He had come back after a year of being away, against his will, with only visions of his scar to have news of his world, and the only thing she did was to slap him!

An hysterical feeling was rising in her.



She shook herself, she would not give in, not now, she had to remain strong, she had to. She pushed her emotions away. She couldn't indulge herself a break-down.

Drawing in her wavering strength, she steadied her hands.

But before she could speak, one of the Elves spoke up, The Prince.

"You should talk with someone, before you break."

This sent her over the edge.

"WHAT do you know about what happened here? WHAT!?" she yelled.

The Prince was taken aback.

"You took Harry from us when we needed him the most, when Ron and I needed him! And then you come here, waltzing in here and giving advice?!" She took a shaky breath

"How do you dare?! You know nothing, NOTHING of what happened!"

Celen looked at the shivering girl in front of them. She was on the edge of a complete breakdown from the pressure she had accumulated on herself. He had wanted to help, her raging emotional turmoil was getting at his empathic abilities.

He decided that a calm approach would be the safer one.

"I'm an empath, and was offering you some advice."

She closed her mouth and sent him a sharp look. Immediately he felt that no more emotions were leaking from her. He gave her a surprised look. She had blocked her mind, and remarkably well, not that he would try to invade it, but it was surprising to see a human able to.... He squashed this thought immediately. He had decided to stay open minded and would do so.



“We each have our burden. We are at war and my burden is my own,” said Hermione, with a final note in her tone.

Teneb had remained silent, trying to link this girl to the memories he had gained from Harry.

She was burning herself out, that much was visible and she wouldn't be able to stand much more. She had already done it, he realized as a flash of Harry's memory came back to him, during their third year in this school...

But he wouldn't step in, he would let his blood brother handle it. It was his world, and before he could do anything, he had to let Harry reintegrate himself.

He saw that Celen was looking curiously at her, but knew his childhood friend would refrain from doing something foolish. He had been bred to be a King and handling delicate situation had been one of the things he had to learn. He wouldn't commit mistakes.

“Could you tell us a bit more on the school?” he heard himself ask.

It was a safe question, one which wouldn't involve either of them, or feelings. Yes it was the question to ask.

The girl, Hermione, waved her stick... hmm wand and a thick volume flew to her from one of the shelves. Catching it, she then handed it to Teneb.

He looked at the title: “Hogwarts: A History”.

“You'll find most of the facts about the school in this. It's a self updating edition, so it should be fairly accurate.”

The young Elf nodded. He was about to say more but then the door opened and Harry and his friend entered, their arms filled with food and drinks.

They ate in silence, tension filling the room, though Teneb noticed that Harry seemed a little more at ease with the red-head. They must have talked a bit on their trip to the kitchen.



Finally, Teneb stood up, as did Harry, as they heard the mental voices of their dragons, telling them to come down here, immediately, and to wear their Athar clothes.

Harry turned to Ron, Hermione and Celen.

“We need to go back down there, it’s getting out of hand.”

Then he concentrated and suddenly he was wearing his Athar uniform, tugging at the high collar, a gesture which earned a snort from Teneb, he turned towards his confused friends who were eyeing the blood red uniform with caution.

“We’ll talk tonight, I swear, if you agree to it that is.”

They nodded slowly.

With a wave of their hand, Teneb and Celen also changed their clothes to their formal outfit. Once it was done, they hurried back to the Order’s meeting room. On his way back, Harry thought about the talk he had had with Ron on their way to the kitchen.

### **Flashback:**

They exited the room, Harry slightly worried at leaving Hermione, Teneb and Celen alone.

They walked for a few moments in silence.

Then Ron broke it.

“Why did you leave Harry? Why?”

His tone had a tired edge, but Harry could sense that his friend, or so he hoped, was trying to control his temper.

“I didn’t choose to do so, Ron. They didn’t ask for my opinion or permission.”

“Then why didn’t you leave! Why did you stay?”



"I couldn't leave. The Island is surrounded by more wards than Hogwarts. The only way to leave is through a Portal or on a Dragon. And to do that, you must have the rider's authorization, something I wasn't going to get, no matter how much they despised me, or be bonded to a Dragon which can only be done after a year of training at least."

Ron was silence for a moment.

"I don't understand a thing about this, Harry, but you have some things to explain."

Harry felt a surge of anger at Ron's tone.

"I'll tell you and Hermione tonight, once Teneb, Celen, Halan and Demenor have left."

Ron nodded.

"But Ron what happened to you? To Hermione?"

The red-head gave him a sharp glance.

"War happened Harry, surely you must see that. And because of our relation to you we were looked up to."

"But about Hermione? What happened to her?"

Ron raked a hand through his hair, messing it.

"Hermione.... I don't know what to do to help her... Shortly after London's Massacre, her parents were sent into hiding, as she was a target due to our friendship. She hadn't had news of them since, no words, message, nothing. Then she took a lot of things on her: she's the one organizing the clubs and keeping tabs on their progresses, she tutors quite a lot of people, she's doing her own research and playing the secretary for the junior Order. Lately she was put on constant watch after finding something, she didn't tell me what, but it has to do with Voldemort's plan. The Dark Lord ordered her to be taken out of the picture and since then she has people protecting her 24/7."



Harry remained silent.

"She's burning herself out, Harry. Your unexpected arrival was the last straw."

They didn't say more as they reached the kitchen. The house elves were still here and quickly gave them what they asked for. None of them recognized Harry, though he thought Dobby would have.

They headed back to the Room of Requirement in silence, both of them lost in their own thoughts. As they came closer to the room, Harry looked up at Ron. He was looking at him.

"You changed Harry, we all did, but I'd like to have my friend back."

"I'd like that too Ron."

### **End of the Flashback.**

A new understanding had been reached and for that Harry was grateful, he hoped their talk tonight would mend their friendship a bit.

Straightening himself as they arrived to the Order's room, he braced himself. Things had to have degenerated if Rexeran had asked him to wear his formal clothes.

As he was about to enter, he felt the magical energies storming in the room. Yes, he better enter now, before hell broke loose.

--

*"Now.... What did you do to Harry?" His voice was cold and his anger pierced through his words.*

Dumbledore's eyes were stony as he looked at the newcomers. He knew what their races had done to humans. His family had kept detailed archives of the events and had handed them down to their descendants. Few families were still alive. After It, the world had been in shambles, its balance lost. The few communities that had managed to keep their powers hid themselves from those who had not, in fear for their life. But some weren't quick enough and were killed, lynched



out of rage, by mobs of people gone crazy with the loss of their powers. Even fewer communities escaped the Memory Charm which spread over the world. Only three or four did, thanks to the mental abilities they had cultivated.

As the years, centuries, millennia passed, the wizarding community started to form itself, as did the Muggle world. At some times, in a few countries, they even cohabited peacefully. Alas that didn't last... History was filled with witches and wizards being tortured and lynched, the burnings were the lesser of those evils as a trained witch could cast some freezing spells and apparate out. But what happened when it was children or untrained ones who were burnt?

The families which had kept their knowledge of the other races had kept records of that time... but they weren't that many to begin with and as time passed, they started to disappear, through accidents, lack of children, persecution... and the records were lost, burnt, destroyed... Now only four families had survived: the Dumbledores, the Flamels, The Almarez in Peru and the Natsumos in Japan, no, Five, he had forgotten the Araïndirs in Tibet.

But now wasn't the time to reminisce.

Demenor was looking embarrassed and a bit ashamed.

Halan returned Dumbledore's look unwavering.

"Surely, with the events you are aware of, you must imagine what happened."

Dumbledore's frown deepened.

"I can, but I'd like to hear what exactly happened first hand so I know what to expect of my student."

Demenor looked up as Halan answered.

"He was human, the only one among our people, that's what happened."

The Riders' leader decided to speak up.



“I’ll start at the beginning...”

People leaned forwards. All were wondering what had happened to their “savior” either out of genuine concern for him or for their own security, or out of curiosity.

“He arrived at the end of the third week of July.” The Elf took a deep breath; he knew that what he was going to say wouldn’t go over well. “We thought he was a mistake, despite the fact he bore the Dragon mark.” He bowed to the Dragon, “and for that the deeds of this mistake rests on our shoulders. He was a scrawny and unsecured teen, with little if no training in several subjects our races prize. This only reinforced the first impression I had got of him after doing the usual tests.”

He paused.

“What we didn’t realize then was that he was human, the scans showed average power with some anomalies, far from what he later displayed.”

Another pause, now he was going to enter the danger zone and the Dragons seemed to enjoy this.

“Our races are extremely prejudiced against humans, if not to say hateful. The reasons for this go back millennia. Harry took the brunt of this hate. The day of the candidates’ arrival, they are chosen by riders who will mentor them until their bonding. No riders accepted to be Harry’s mentor and I was forced to take him, forbidden by our rules to send him back to his world until the bonding ceremony.”

He could see some of the faces of those present coloring, either in anger or distaste and it was only the beginning.

“I used my Leader’s status to dismiss the responsibilities of a mentor and told the Masters to take care of him. What happened ? I don’t really know...”

Mental and physical harassment, humiliations, insults added to his nightmares, said Rexeran. It pushed him to try something foolish on Christmas, and led to my first meeting with him.



Demenor bowed his head.

“At the end of the first nine months of their stay on the Island, they are presented to the Dragons. I know now, that he was attacked on his way to the presentation and was nearly killed by a group of candidates. From what I gathered, he was saved by Teneb and those two were always seen together from this point.” He sighed.

“Despite Teneb’s status as the son of the King’s Counsellor and the Prince’s closest friend, the harassment against Harry didn’t lessen and even young Teneb suffered from it. What they did, I don’t know, but from what happened a few days ago, I can only say that they underwent heavy training.”

Everybody was silent, but Demenor could see it was the calm before the storm from some expressions he was noticing.

“At the end of the first year of training, the bonding ceremony takes place, linking the rider to his or her dragon. The Bond is more or less strong, depending on the person, but in all cases, except of rare occurrence, this bond is a life one. The first day is dedicated to a friendly competition between the candidates to find the Athar(s), that’s to say the leaders among the riders. Teneb and Harry were singled out and won this title, much to the shock of everyone. The next day they were attacked again, I don’t know the details, but knew it was serious enough to warrant them the right of Dueling the guilty party.”

They had their tendons severed and were given the Dolorais Venom and the Finite Draught, Gae supplied.

Demenor and Halan went green, they hadn’t known that part. Both of them knew these poisons and their effects, added to the wounds.... It was a miracle none of them suffered lasting damages.

This was the trigger of the onslaught of anger that had been bottling itself in the room.

Curses flew to the two of them, startling them so much of their shocked state, that none of them had the time to react. It only thanks to the Dragons that no harm came to them.



Dumbledore did nothing to stop his companions, his eyes blazing at the two of them.

This went on for a few minutes, when the doors opened silently allowing five people in.

--

Harry stepped in the room to be met with the sight of adults cursing Demenor and Halan. Both of them seemed shocked, angry, but were protected by a rainbow bubble.

Gae and I are shielding them. said Rexeran, privately.

What have you told them?

Rexeran sent him a brief summary of what had been said.

He heard a gasp on his right and saw Ron and Hermione tensed up.

Taking a deep breath, he turned to his companions.

“Shield yourself, please.”

They nodded, not asking questions.

Drawing his wand, Harry started to concentrate. No matter how much easier Magic was with his wand, it now gave him a foreign sensation to use it.

“Expelliarmus” he whispered, unleashing the power he had gathered.

The intensity you put in the words of the spell had no influence on the spell itself, it was more of a way to channel it. Or so Arxeren had said when he had yelled a spell once, earning himself a thirty-minute lecture on Magical theory and then the task of learning to cast curse, jinxes, charms with a simple whispers and for the simplest, without words.

Every wand flew to him and clattered on the floor, drawing everyone’s eyes on him, while the bubble around Demenor and Halan disappeared, in a flutter of colors.



With another flick of his wand, the wood sticks gathered themselves in a neat package which floated to his hand.

He was standing in the doorway, Teneb and Celen at one of his sides, Ron and Hermione on the other.

The people present looked stunned at the picture they made, the visual effect of the clothes was undeniable.

Harry walked back to his seat and sat his eyes sweeping over the table.

"I will only say this once. What happened to me while I was there is a matter which only concerns me and them. Punishments were handed to the guilty parts. Moreover if I catch someone harming someone else, be it an Elf, Magis, Elemental or human, they will answer to me. I won't stand for discrimination. I might be a child, I might be just sixteen, a teen, but believe me, you don't want to cross me."

They just looked at him, some surprised, some cautious, other worried, other suspicious. Dumbledore was looking at him with sadness.

Harry nodded, he understood, but what was done was done.

Dumbledore turned to Demenor and Halan.

"I apologize for this," he said though his tone seemed a bit forced.

Halan gave him a wry smile.

"No harm was done, thanks the Dragons," he turned to them, bowing in thanks, "and in a way we deserved it," you could see it cost him to say so. "I'll be truthful with you; I do not like humans at all. Had I not learned about the ritual this Dark Lord is about to start, I wouldn't have bothered helping you. Most of my race will share this opinion. This attitude is rooted deep into us and had been for ages. The changes, if some are to take place, will be brought by the youths, and I think there will be some. My people will do what has to be done to ensure that menace is taken care of, but besides that, I can't make any promises."



Dumbledore simply nodded. Seeing this Halan continued.

“The people we’ll send you will probably want to keep interaction with you to a minimum and behave haughtily. I ask you to follow their choice and show them the courtesy you’ll show to strangers and not to take their attitude personally. They will be asked to do so as well.”

Demenor followed.

“The same is to be said for elves and Elementals, though a few of them might act a bit friendlier. Because of Harry’s stay with us, our society is going to be faced with many changes and people will resist to them.”

Dumbledore clasped his hands together and nodded in agreement.

“I’ll do this if you do the same.”

Angry faces could be seen in the room, most of them glaring at them, but they understood what was at stake. Tempers were restrained, words were bitten back and a relative calm fell on the room as they all started to plan the upcoming events.

--

They spent most of the day planning, lunch was taken down in the Room. There were shouts, arguments, explanations, but in the end they managed to sort out a plan.

Teneb, Celen Demenor and Halan left discreetly in the evening. Rexeran and Gae went with them but told them they would go see the Dragons of this world.

It was decided that Harry’s return would be announced the next day, but that the involvement of the Elves, Magis and Elementals would remained a secret until the arrival of the Masters, the scholars and Najira. He was then given a room for the night and dinner for three was brought here, since Ron and Hermione were adamant about staying with him.

They ate quietly and then settled in the couch.



Ron cast a glance at Hermione. She had reverted to her 'busy secretary' persona during the meeting, but had been oddly quiet during the dinner.

"So, Harry? Care to explain?"

Harry looked down.

"Well, I'll try, but you have to understand there will be things I won't be able to talk about, either out of a promise or because I can't, not right now, perhaps I will later, but not now."

Ron seemed a bit hurt at this, but Hermione nodded, this time looking up.

Then Harry started to tell them what had happened. He didn't go into detail; he wasn't ready for that yet.

Once he was done, it was quite late. Ron was staring off in space, lost in his thought, his fist clenched, his knuckles white, though Harry couldn't tell if the anger was directed at him or at the riders.

Hermione was once again twitching her hands.

Suddenly, she broke down, to the surprise of the other two.

Harry looked at Ron who shrugged, at a loss. Hermione was a sister to him now, but sometimes he really couldn't understand her, like he couldn't understand the mood swings Ginny was going through. His mother was telling him it was alright, but he couldn't see how it could be.

Sighing, Harry motioned to the red-head that he would handle this.

He didn't know how to act around the girl anymore and was quite wary of her. But he couldn't let her do this to herself.

Ron nodded and left quietly.

Harry sat quietly near her.



“Hermione..” Looking at her he frowned, something was off. He sniffed and froze. Arxeren had forced him to learn to recognize a few potions by scent: mostly poisons, but also a few commonly used potions, should he be in the dark while needing to take a potion, thus not able to look at it.

This scent of orange and spice was characteristic of an energizing Potion, and if the mint smell was true, then she was taking the Entropian Potion.

Now he was definitively worried. This potion was mildly addictive.

“What are you doing to yourself?...”

--

Hermione felt herself lose her grip on her emotions as Harry told his story. Remorse about the slap she had given him was eating at her. How could she have done it to him? To Harry? She had never had a great understanding of her emotions, most of the time she repressed or dismissed them as silly.

True it wasn't too bad, but She. Had. Slapped. Him, without asking before. Where had been the calm, the cool logic she was famed for? She had to go and slap her best friend the very moment he came back.

Finally it got too much and she broke down, throwing her face in her hands

She didn't catch Harry saying her name, but she did hear his next sentence.

“What are you doing to yourself?”

This made her freeze, but didn't stop her tears. He couldn't know, nobody did!

She felt his hands raise her head and looked at the concerned face of her one-time best friend. Someone she had worried about constantly for the past year.



“I-I... I’m sorry Harry”

His eyes narrowed for a few fractions of seconds.

“I know that Hermione, I know... but it doesn’t make it easier for me... I-I.... You and Ron saved me when I was there....”

He looked at her.

“I changed Hermione, you did too, and I don’t know if you’re going to like or want to befriend the person I became.”

Hermione nodded, understanding, as Harry dropped his hands.

“Better?” he asked.

“Yes, “ she whispered. “I’m sorry Harry.”

He shook his head.

“Don’t worry about that for now.”

“You should rest, your day was tiring and tomorrow is going to be even more,” she said softly.

Harry gave her a sharp look.

“I can take care of myself Hermione, which is more than I can say of you. What are you doing to yourself? Why? Do you want to burn yourself out and end up in St Mungo?”

Hermione winced.

“I’ve nothing to tell you Harry. I have to do this, for the school, for the war. I’m needed.”

“And you won’t do much good if you end up bed ridden for months either out of magical burnout or addiction.”

“I can’t step out! I have to help! I Can’t Leave!”

Harry’s voice grew colder.



“Then find people to help Hermione, you’re not the only one able to take notes, or the only one with great academics.”

“You don’t understand, Harry...”

“Then explain me Hermione! Why do you feel the need to drug yourself with a potion. You’re not stupid, at least you weren’t last year. You know the Entropian is addictive!”

“It keeps me focused, then I don’t think about the death, about my parents, about the fact that I can’t do a thing without having people around, watching me because Voldemort wanted me out of the picture,” she was nearly yelling at that point.

Harry looked at her.

“I won’t let you do this Hermione, even if I have to tie you to your bed to make sure you sleep enough time. This is a war. People die in war and you can’t do much about it,” he stated in a strained voice.

“Your parents are alive and hidden, I don’t know who their secret keeper is, but I don’t think Dumbledore would make a mistake with the choice of the Keeper.”

Hermione calmed down, taking deep breaths, Harry’s words echoing through her. She knew he was right, but she hadn’t seen her parents since the start of the school year and had had no news of them since the attack on London.

She turned to Harry. He had changed, that much was obvious, physically and mentally.

She felt as if she lost her friend, but had gained someone else, someone she wanted to try to get to know.

“You have to take care of yourself, Hermione. Find some help to assist you, I’ll even volunteer. Just take care of yourself.”

She gave a tentative nod, then, spoke up.

“What will happen now Harry?”



Harry gave her a weary sigh and Hermione realized how taxing his stay with the riders must have been.

"I don't know, Hermione, time will tell. But if you're willing to give our friendship a try, I will too."

"I want to help you Harry. If I did all of this, it was in your memory, because I knew you'd have wanted us to fight."

"I'm not the same Harry as the one who disappeared last year..."

She shook her head.

"I realized that Harry, but I know I want my best friend back," repeating, unknown to herself, the same words Ron had told Harry earlier

Harry offered her a small smile and it reassured her.

Things might be different but maybe with time it would be alright.

They talked a bit more, Hermione reverting to her old curious self and asking question about the Elfish world. They finally parted and for the first time in weeks, Hermione didn't drink her potion, but instead let herself fall into a deep sleep. Harry was back, things would be alright.

--

Harry stayed seated in his chair for a few minutes after Hermione's departure, pondering on the day's events. Sighing, he went to a table and setting out a quill and some parchment he settled to write this letter. The headmaster had assured him he would have her get it the next day.

*Dear Fleur*

*I'm writing you to ask you a favor....*

--

Well, that's about it.



Not a lot of action, I know, there'll be more in the next one.

Thanks again to all of you who reviewed this story.

Naia



## **Chapter Twenty two**

Harry stayed seated in his chair for a few minutes after Hermione's departure, pondering on the day's events. Sighing, he went to a table and, after setting out a quill and some parchment, he settled to write this letter. The headmaster had assured him he would have her get it the next day.

*Dear Fleur*

*I'm writing you to ask you a favor....*

--

Harry stayed up late that night, drafting his letter to Fleur, then trying to plan what he would do, what he would say, how he would have to act.

Dumbledore would announce his return tomorrow morning, saying he had been kidnapped, had managed to escape and had been training since then. The whole part concerning the elves, magis, elementals and dragons would be hidden until their arrival in five days.

Then there was the matter of Snape. As much as Harry disliked the man, he was a valuable asset to the order, but couldn't be of any use with this thing in him.

Harry had had a vision of the Dark Lord receiving the device, as it had been brought to him after a report of Wormtail, report which hadn't been to the Dark Lord liking. He needed to alter the thing enough so that Snape could be able to spy but that the Voldemort wouldn't notice his little bug had been tampered with.

Sighing, not looking towards facing the school tomorrow, he went to sleep, wishing Teneb could be here. Sensing his master's distress, Lucky jumped on the bed and curled at Harry's side. The little fox had remained in the bag, sleeping, thanks to a small charm from Harry, as he didn't want the curious little fox running in the castle or out in the Forest.



As soon as he had been alone in his room, he had woken him up. The little one had been quite cross at having been charmed and had been sulking since then.

The warmth of the small body seeped through the bed cover and comforted Harry. Shadow would be back in five days and he looked forwards having his stallion back, but he knew that Erin would take care of his mount.

Willing himself to sleep, it still took him a long time to fall into Morpheus' arms, worries about what was to come plaguing him.

--

Hermione woke up at five in the morning as she had always done, her alarm startling her out of her rest. A wave of exhaustion started to spread in her body, making it hard for her to sit. Every part of her body was screaming for her to go back under the covers, lay there and sleep the whole week through. Instinctively she reached for the drawer of her nightstand, opened it and after a few minutes of fumbling grabbed a vial half filled with a golden colored liquid. Uncorking it, she raised it to her lips before realizing what she was about to do. Startled, she halted her move, the vial mid way to her mouth. Was she that addicted? That dependant on the potion? She had always prided herself on being self sufficient; couldn't she do her part without the potion?

She recalled the times when she had first took it.

### **Flashback**

It had been a month since the London's massacre. Voldemort had been striking a lot, targeting the preeminent Light families. Fortunately, most of them had been able to go undercover, or in hiding. Sadly a few weren't quick enough and were slaughtered, despite the fight they put up. The majority of the Aurors had been wiped out, The Ministry was in shambles: Fudge had been kicked out, Diggory was quickly chosen as the new Minister.

Then there was the fall of Durmstrang, Beauxbâtons destruction... During those months, a junior order was created, made of the top



students in every year, from fourth to seventh. She and Ron were part of it. They were being trained extensively in DADA, charms, Transfiguration and Potion.

Quickly she came to realize that quite a lot of students were looking up to her and Ron, even the upper year students. They were Harry's legacy and had been part of his adventures. The younger ones were thinking of them as saviors. But they weren't.

As the time had passed, she had been chosen as the secretary for the junior order, Ron was one of the leaders, but usually took care of the planning parts. The clubs had been a success and Hermione had volunteered to be one of those organizing them and gathering their results. Being one of the best potion brewers in her year had made her also join the Brewing group. She had also started to tutor several students and had her prefect duties to complete.

She had started to sleep less and less, an average to four hours a night and it was wearing her down, but she needed to do it, to feel useful and her pride stopped her from asking for help. She might be muggle born, but she was a great witch and would prove to be able to do this alone!

But she was getting more and more tired, having troubles to focus on her studies and prone to fall asleep. Something which happened in class a few days later.

She had been in Transfiguration. They were reviewing the steps of the Animagus transformation. She felt her eyelids get heavier and though she tried to remain awake, she was fighting a lost battle and was asleep minutes later.

A sharp shake awakened her. Looking up, she was faced with the concerned face of her Transfiguration teacher.

"Miss Granger? Are you feeling well?"

Her face red, she heard a few sniggers, as she tried to gather her thoughts.

"Y-Yes, professor, I'm sorry...."



McGonagall, stared at her.

“See me after class, Miss Granger, and do try to stay awake in my class.”

Wishing the ground would open and swallow her, she listened to the teacher as she explained the danger of the transformation.

The talk with the professor shook her. The head of Gryffondor was concerned by her behavior, her grades had been slipping a bit. Not a lot, but enough to worry her. She then asked her if she'd like to be discharged of some of her duties.

This hurt the young Gryffondor. She had to find a solution but she wouldn't admit she couldn't do it. After assuring her professor that she would be alright, that she had just been a bit behind her schedule but nothing to be concerned about. As soon as the classes were done she went to the Library, she wouldn't be seen as weak, she would hold up. After some research, she found what she had been looking for: The Entropian potion.

It had been in a book from the Restricted section, about Energy potions.

### The Entropian Potion:

*This simple energy potion was created by Eldara the Bright in the Middle Ages. This draught increases the energy levels of the drinker and enables him to be able to live with little or no sleep. This potions, thanks to the unicorn's hair mixed with a small dose of fox glove and with the blood of the drinker, increases the amount of oxygen able to be carried by the red blood corpuscles as well as multiplying the energy reserves of the drinker.*

*However this potion if used repeatedly can get quite addictive, since the drinker's body gets used to these levels of energy and the suppression of the use of the potion create a feeling of extreme exhaustion since the body used to high level of energy can't sustain itself with the usual ones. Repeated uses of the potion left residues insides the body, increasing the need for the potion. The situation can*



*lead to a complete burn out and even to a magical coma. This potion is to be taken with extreme care.*

This was what she needed, she would be careful but with the right doses, but this would allow her to keep up with everything. Yes, this was the solution. The ingredients were easy to obtain, and the potion, though tricky didn't require a lot of time to prepare, only three hours.

The following day, she gathered her potion ingredients and started to brew the potion she had read about. She brewed a whole batch of it for future use.

The next days proved the potion to be successful, she didn't feel the exhaustion she had experienced for the past weeks.

### **End of the Flashback**

No she wasn't addicted! She would show Harry she wasn't. Determined, she placed the vial back in her drawer and got up, tiredness hitting her hard. Fighting it, she headed for the shower. Cold waters would do the trick.

She quickly showered and went to the common room, fighting to keep her eyes open. Her eyelids were heavy but she willed herself to walk down the stairs. She always went through her notes in the morning, readying everything she needed for the day, the tutoring and the clubs. The day should be quite hectic. She knew Harry's return would create a lot of troubles. Then there was the junior order's matter. What was going to happen now that Harry was back? Would he take the lead of the group? Currently, the order was ruled by a kind of council: A member from each house per year; which meant sixteen people: for the fifth year, there were Blaise for Slytherin, Ron for Gryffondor, Padma Patil for Ravenclaw and Justin for Hufflepuff. What would happen now?

Shaking her head, she dismissed the thought, time would tell, and this was Harry's problem, not hers to deal with.

As she readied herself for the day, more Gryffindors started to come down. At seven, Ron got down and both of them stood and without



speaking left the room, followed by a few surprised gazes. Usually they stayed in the common room for a bit longer.

They walked quickly to Harry's room and knocked on the portrait. After a minute, the portrait slid aside, revealing the entrance of the room.

They stepped in and heard the entrance closed itself behind them.

Harry was sitting in a corner, near a window, his gaze fixed on the forest.

He turned towards them and greeted them with a small smile, before returning his gaze to the forest, petting the red fur of Lucky who was comfortably settled in his lap.

They walked to him and sat on the chair next to his own. A tensed silence filled the room.

"Ready, Harry?" finally said Ron.

Sighing, the young wizard looked at his friend.

"I don't think I'll ever be..."

Meanwhile, Hermione was eyeing the young fox warily.

"Hmmm, Harry? What is it?" she asked, pointed to the ginger creature.

"Him? Oh, his name is Lucky. I found him. Apparently the whole family was killed, and only he survived, thus his name. You'll meet Shadow in five days."

"Shadow?"

"My stallion. Be wary of him, he's got quite a temper. However this guy here is extremely social, and curious as a cat."

Probably sensing he was being talked about, the young fox stretched and jumped down from Harry's lap, approaching the other two-legs and smelling them.



Looking at her watch, Hermione stood up.

“We should go to breakfast, or we’ll be late.”

Nodding, Ron stood up. With a last look through the window, Harry got up from his chair. He had been wondering if he should wear his Athar clothes or not. Wearing them would show the people what he had become and he had realized that they always earned him some respect, even when those seeing him didn’t know their meaning. Not wearing them would on the other hand hide what he now was and made people underestimate him... but it would also mean that they wouldn’t be as quick to respect him.

Finally he made his choice and was suddenly wearing the customary black robes of a Hogwarts’ student with small differences. The cut, though similar, allowed him more freedom of movement. He wasn’t wearing a house’s crest but his Athar symbol instead. Gone was the tie, but he wore his torque. His dragon medallion was hidden under his clothes, as well as the Flame of Sardogh. He decided against taking his sword, but took his knives, dagger and darts.

They left the room, Harry locking and warding it behind them. He took Lucky with him, deciding to let him loose outside before going to the Hall. He cast a strong shielding charm on his little friend not wanting him to be injured during his exploration of the castle grounds. They headed for the Hall stopping at the entrance for Harry to let his fox out, then walked to a small room next to the Hall. During the whole thing, Harry had turned himself invisible not wanting to risk being seen. They knocked and entered.

As planned, The Headmaster was here as well as all the staff. There were curious glances sent Harry’s way. Apparently several members of the staff hadn’t been warned of Harry’s return.

“Good morning, Miss Granger, Mr. Weasley, Mr. Potter,” As Dumbledore said the last name, there were several muffled gasps as the eyes turned toward the ebony haired teen.

Snape’s eyes were wide as he pointed to his throat. With a reassuring smile, Dumbledore continued.



“As you can see, Mr. Potter is alive and back to us. The circumstances of his absence will remain secret for now, but will be probably explained in a few days.” Some teachers were about to ask question, but the old wizard, held up his hand.

“I’m sure you all have questions, but this will have to wait. Breakfast is awaiting us.”

Grudgingly, they headed for the door. On their way out, most of them shot Harry curious and suspicious looks. Snape glared at him as he stalked out of the room, robes billowing behind him.

Completely unfazed by it, Harry straightened his robes, checking his knives, then he looked up at the Headmaster.

“Ready Harry?”

He nodded, not speaking, his face a bland mask, his eyes calm and focused, in appearance at least.

With a sad smile, Dumbledore motioned for them to go.

The three youths left and a few seconds later stopped in front of the door of the Great Hall. Taking a deep breath, Harry pushed them opened and, stilling his nerves, walked in, Hermione and Ron on his side.

Silence welcomed them, only broken by hushed whispers as they made their way to the Gryffondor table.

“Who is he?”

“Is he new?”

“Do you know....”

“...transfer?...”

They ignored it and sat at the table, earning inquisitive looks from their housemates.



Dumbledore entered a few seconds after them and made his way to the Staff's table. Once there he lightly tapped his glass, calling for attention.

"Good Morning students," his eyes were twinkling, "Today, I'm happy to announce the return of one of your peer. After a year of absence, he's now back among us." His twinkle doubled as he saw people put two and two together and turn with disbelieving faces toward Harry. "So, without further ado, I welcome Mr. Potter back to Hogwarts."

Exclamations broke in the Hall as all the eyes turned to the black-haired stranger who had been accompanying Ron and Hermione. People were standing to get a better look at him, all the while chatting excitedly.

Dumbledore tapped on his glass a few more time, trying to gather the attention of his pupils.

"Yes, yes, welcome back Mr. Potter, but I have a few more announcements to make. As you all know, the end-of-the-year exams will take place in a week. After that will come the holidays. You can either go back to your home, or stay at the school that will remain open to host those willing to spend this time here. Those wishing to stay will have to talk to their head of house. The next year will start on September the first. Contrary to the past year, you won't be taking the Express to come to the school. A teacher, or an Auror or an Unspeakable will go and fetch you. Thank you for listening."

With that, he sat back and watched the reactions to the news he had given.

The Gryffondor house was mobbing the three teenagers, every member of the house trying to get as close of Harry as possible, to speak to him, to make sure it was really him. Most of them had huge smiles on their faces. The Hufflepuff table was in a similar state. Smiling faces and curious looks were turned towards the Lion's table.

The Ravenclaws were much calmer. Most of them were discussing, serious faces tinted by some suspicion and caution.



Then came the Slytherins. Since the London's massacre, the house had been divided, those siding openly against Voldemort, those following the Dark Lord's path and those in between, either because they wished to remain neutral or because they hadn't chosen a side yet.

Blaise Zabini had risen as the leader of the light side of Slytherin, while Draco Malfoy was looked as the prince of the Dark ones. The two boys had been long time friends and despite them being on the opposite sides of the war, they still could be seen together from time to time.

Blaise was eyeing Harry with a calculative gleam in his eyes, trying to assess him, and to foresee the consequences his return would have. His face was guarded and cautious. He wouldn't trust this so called Harry Potter without having proof the dark-haired teen was truly whom he was said to be. The young Slytherin glanced at his fair-haired housemate. The blond youth had his poker face up, his grey eyes were fixed on his long time rival. His lips tightened and his brows lightly frowning. Blaise knew why, this Potter looked hardly anything like the former Gryffondor pride. He looked back at the Lion's table.

Gone was the small scrawny star seeker, gone were the round glasses and the readable face.

Yes, if he was truly Potter, then whatever he had been through had changed him, just how much remained to be found, and he would find it before making any decision. He hadn't survived so far to be foolish enough to trust things at first glance. Looking at the Ravenclaw table he caught the eye of Cho Chang. The older girl nodded, apparently sharing his doubts.

The Slytherin spared a glance at the Head table. Dumbledore was sitting, a mad twinkle in his blue eyes as he watched the scene and Blaise had to repress a sigh. How could that wizard be always that cheerful? McGonagall was speaking with Sinistra and Figg, sneaking glances at her house every now and then. Flitwick seemed excited about something as he was talking with Vector, Lupin and Mad-Eye. As he looked at his Head of house, Blaise caught his eye. The man



seemed to be sulking about something but as he held his student gaze he started to move his fingers slightly.

Caution was the word spelled.

Blaise nodded slightly.

Yes, caution was the best conduct to adopt.

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Harry was growing more and more uncomfortable. For a year he had been alone, spare for Teneb's presence, and being surrounded by people like this was overwhelming him. This added to the continuing stream of questions was drawing his restraint on his powers thin.

Harry.... Strengthen your barriers

He nearly jumped out of his skin upon hearing his guardian voice.

Arxeren? Where have you been?

Here and there, mostly working on those blocks....

Any luck there?

Well....

Harry felt himself frown slightly, but covered it, all the while listening with one ear to the incessant chatter surrounding him.

Arxeren?

We managed to find the cause behind a part of them, but for the other part, I'm sure the Powers and the Dragons know what they are, but they won't say anything. I just know that it isn't endangering you or reducing your powers.

This time, Harry didn't bother to hide his frown.

I don't like it.... But what about the other part?



Arxeren's voice fell into his lecture mode.

For Teneb, the roots of the blocks are due to the enchantment the wizards cast on the Magis, Elementals and elves in retaliation to them.

Are you sure? Harry was a bit surprised that wizards had managed to create an enchantment so strong that its effect was still strong 20 000 years after.

Yes, the basic root has a definite human signature.

If this is the case, then why was it so difficult to find what they were?

I'll have you know, Mr. Obvious, that this part of the blocks was a complete tangle. This block is active on several layers of the minds, each of them interconnected, his effects vary with each individual. We had to find the root of the charm to see the signature... Add to that the fact that it is intertwined with the other block and you'll understand why it was so difficult.

Ok, Ok...

Well, on you, you have the same part than Teneb, the one we can't manage to find a cause, well, as far as we are concerned. The strange thing is that only you and your friend have it.... But well! The other part is a twist due to the killing curse which was enhanced when you were forced to cross the Veil. Your energies reacted strangely, twisting it a bit

Is it affecting my powers?

No, not really, it's making your control more difficult, as well as the access to some of your powers.

Could you remove it?

There was a pause, something which didn't bode well for a positive answer.

No, at least not without modifying your inner magic which would mean that you'd have to start your training again from notch.



Harry sighed.

And for Teneb?

We don't know. Human magic was never a forte of the guardians. It's been millennia since there was a human rider and we put your kind of magic aside, having no use for it. We could try though...

But....

But, the chances of us messing up something are bigger than us succeeding, moreover, this enchantment had been active for 20 000 years now, it's completely and deeply rooted in their inner core. The best solution would be for your race to lift it themselves, if there're still people able to do so....

Maybe Dumbledore would know....

Maybe, you'll have to ask him...

Harry realized suddenly that now wasn't a really good time for a chat with his guardian.

Arxeren, I think we should leave it at that for now, I'll talk to the headmaster, but I'd better went back to the discussion....

It would be wise indeed... I'll probably talk to you later this night.

As you wish, could you tell Kaelia to tell Teneb to meet me in the Plan tonight?

I will...take care Harry, and for sake of everything sacred, keep your powers under control!

Had Harry been in the plan, he would have scowled, but now wasn't the moment. With a few more words he ended his talk with his guardian, focusing his attention back to his surroundings. Apparently nobody had noticed him spacing out. He was still surrounded by his house and flooded by questions. Despite what he had told Arxeren, it was seriously getting on his nerves. He was used to the silence and the loneliness, and being the center of the attention like this was not



to his liking. He did not like it before going to the Headquarters but now he liked it even less.

Finally, enough was enough. He stood up, moving with the fluidity his training had given him. Silence followed his move.

Raising an eyebrow at Ron and Hermione, he opened his mouth.

“Aren’t classes supposed to start in a few minutes?”

Immediately most of the students in the hall looked at their watches and hushed curses flew through the air as the majority of them scrambled to their feet, hurrying out, rushing to their first class.

Harry barely restrained himself from smirking. Most of the teachers were still at their table, a fact few seemed to have registered... As he looked around he saw that most of those who had were Slytherins.

“You still don’t like attention Harry, do you?” said Ron, with a small smile.

Harry shook his head.

“Even less, what’s our first class by the way?”

“History, then Potions. We’re mainly revising for the OWLs though...” said Hermione. “Will you pass them?”

Harry shrugged,

“I don’t know, there’re not first on my priority list.”

“But...”

“Hermione, Whether or not I take them, I already have a task to fulfill and in a week. Besides, when they’ll arrive, I’ll be busy enough trying to keep them in check without adding the stress of these exams.”

Hermione sighed.



"You're right, I just wish we could have a normal life: go to school, pass our exams, get a job, get married.... A boring normal life." She yawned, her voice sleepy.

"Forget about it Hermione, it doesn't do any good to wish for the impossible." As the three of them walked towards the door, he leaned on her "I'm glad you didn't take it today..."

Ron noticed the exchange and felt a pang of jealousy which he quickly suppressed. He didn't see Hermione in a romantic light, she was his sister but now that Harry was back, he was afraid she and him wouldn't be as close. He squashed the very thought of it. He was glad Harry was back. He had been asking for it since he had heard of his disappearance.

His first thought as Harry had been back had been to pummel him to the ground for the worry he had caused them. But he had restrained himself. He had had a hard time controlling his temper over the past months. But he and all the junior Order's leaders or prominent members had been heavily trained in Mental Arts, mainly in Occlumency, Legilimency and Emotion control. The last one had been the part where he had struggled. He had always reacted first and thought after in the past. And to make the matter worse, Snape had been one of their teachers, something which didn't make the task easier. But he had managed it in the end. He hadn't had the choice to fail this.

He had read somewhere that war changed people. At first he hadn't believed it, but now as he looked at Harry and Hermione, he understood. Even if they managed to live through this, nothing would ever be the same...

"So the Boy wonder is back?..."

Ron was startled out of his musing by Malfoy's drawling tone. The Slytherin's eyes were registering the changes that had taken place in his rival appearance. The red head boy reached for his wand. To Hell with mental control, he wouldn't let this little ferret push him around.

"Good morning to you too, Malfoy," replied Harry, not fazed in the least.



This seemed to unsettle the blond for a few seconds, before he chose another approach.

"Scared were you Potter, you ran away like the coward you were, didn't you?"

"Think whatever you want, Malfoy... It's not like I care..."

A frown appeared on Draco's face.

"So you admit it, Potter?" he said in a taunting voice.

Harry shot him a piercing look.

"I fail to see any reason for your interest in my actions, Malfoy." With that he turned his back on them and left, ignoring the deep frown on his rival's face, the curious look of Blaise Zabini who had been watching the whole scene from the shadows and the concerned glances his old friends shot him. The Blond Slytherin stomped out of the room pondering on this last encounter. Yes Potter had definitely changed. He needed to inform his father on this.

"Meeting, tonight at 8, RoR," said Hermione, as soon as Malfoy was out of ear-shot.

"Will he be here?" The Slytherin tilted his head towards the door.

"Probably, can't say for sure."

A small smile made his way on Blaise's face.

"It should be interesting, I'll spread the word."

They parted, each of them going to their respective classes.

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The day passed slowly, at least from Harry's point of view and he was relieved when he exited his last class which had been Charms. After a few words with Ron and Hermione, he exited the castle to take a walk around the lake. He needed to get out of the castle before he snapped.



It was quickly getting rather annoying. If Harry had found that the stares in his earlier years were irritating, the situation now was getting way out of hand.

There were those looking at him like he was the messiah, coming back to rid them of Voldemort with a snap of his fingers, there were those looking continuously at him to make sure he was real before whispering excitedly to their friends, those looking at him with suspicion.... The list went on.

Breathing deeply, he sat on the edge of the lake, staring at the calm waters, and tried to calm himself but nearly had a heart-attack when a ginger blur jumped on him.

Chuckling lightly, he petted the small creature. The fox nipped playfully at his fingers, earning himself a small laugh from his two-legs. Happy with himself, the young animal settled in Harry's lap, curling, falling quickly asleep as Harry kept on brushing through his fur. Everything was silent, an eerie calmness falling on the nature, helping soothing Harry's frayed nerves. Not for the first time this day, Harry regretted Teneb's absence. He knew realized how much he had come to rely on his blood brother.

With a sigh, Harry, took of his outer robe, and after placing Lucky on it, the fox still sleeping soundly, he stood up and with a few whispered words called his sword to him.

As his hand closed around the handle, he relished in the comfort his blade gave him. Inhaling slowly, he closed his mind to the outside, only focusing on his body and his sword. With deliberate slow movements, he started his usual routine. Doing it over and over again, accelerating every time before slowing down little by little until he stood, unmoving, his sword at his side, his breathing heavier and his heart pounding.

Although this had evacuated some of his stress, he needed more. He was about to conjure an opponent, when he remembered he didn't want his wandless abilities to become public knowledge. He might seem alone, but he would bet his life on it. Annoyed at having to use his wand, he flicked it with a snarl, conjuring a shadow figure, setting it to one of the higher level.



Tucking the wooden stick in his sleeve, he raised his sword and bowed, mimicked by the figure in front of him before falling in a stance, centering himself before attacking, as the dummy wouldn't make the first move.

For several minutes he channeled all of his stress into his attacks. Knowing he had to get back to the school as dusk was nearing, he dissipated the shadow opponent with a well placed strike and sheathed the sword, before banishing it back to his room. He turned to look at the castle. The sight made his heart tightened a bit. It was still as impressive as ever, but he didn't know if he had a place there anymore.

A slow clapping erupted.

He whirled on his heels, mentally cursing himself for not setting his usual wards. He wiped his face from emotions as he faced his old rival. Malfoy had changed a bit, he had gotten taller and filled out. But he was still gelling his hair and sporting the same I'm-superior-to-you look, carrying himself as if he was royalty.

"Well, it seems you learned a thing or two this year, Potter, as ludicrous as it sounds," he said, a predatory glance in his eyes.

Harry remained silent. In his current state, Malfoy was no match for him, so he settled for crossing his arms, quickly casting a small silent sleeping charm on Lucky. He didn't want Malfoy learning about him if it was avoidable.

Finally as none of them seemed to be about to speak, Harry, broke the silence.

"What do you want, Malfoy?"

The blond teen shot him a guarded look.

"What make you think I want something?"

Harry rolled his eyes.



“Please, Malfoy, I might be a Gryffondor, but I’m not stupid.” He pretended not to have heard the whispered ‘could have fooled me’ from the Slytherin. “But you have to admit that, given our past history, it’s difficult to think you’d seek me to have a friendly talk.”

A smirk graced Malfoy’s face.

“You changed, Potter. That is obvious. I just wonder how much...”

Harry’s eyes hardened.

“Why are you asking, Malfoy? Why the sudden interest?”

The smirk disappeared.

“It was just a thought, Potter. You could be great, you know.”

Harry repressed a shudder; those had been the Hat’s words.

The blond seemed to sense his uneasiness and his smirk deepened. Harry turned to face the lake, presenting his back to his rival. A tense silence settled between the two of them, only to be broken by Harry’s strained voice.

“You know what Malfoy? I was told that life was what we chose it to be.”

He turned back to the teen.

“While I don’t completely agree with it anymore, it’s still true in some way. We all have choices to make. Some were made for me, others weren’t, but I made this choice years ago. On the other hand, you still have to decide... so what will you chose to be?”

Harry picked up his robe, cradling Lucky while hiding the ginger body from Malfoy, and started is walk back to the castle.

He paused as he heard the Slytherin speak in a bitter voice.

“Easy for you to say Potter, but not all of us have the luxury of a choice.”



The young Athar turned his head, his eyes locking with the grey ones of Draco Malfoy.

“We always have.”

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As Harry made his way back to the castle, he pondered on his encounter with Malfoy. This had to have been the strangest talk he ever had with the Slytherin. Stepping in the school, he pushed thoughts of it to the back of his head as he sought out Ron and Hermione.

Looking at his watch, he realized it was nearly dinner time and decided to put Lucky in the Gryffondor dorm as it had been decided yesterday he would go back to the dorm once his return was made public knowledge. Minutes later, he was back to the Hall. He immediately spotted the red hair of Ron, sitting near Hermione. The two of them had save him a seat. He was relieved to see Hermione. After the first class, she had had to be excused, too tired to manage the rest of the classes. As he headed towards them, he was aware of the stares and whispers following him. He tried to ignore them, but couldn't completely shut them out.

During the morning, he had, for the first time, been happy to go to potion, since Snape had ensured that everyone concentrated to the task at hand and not on him. However the Potion teacher hadn't changed in behaviour.

As he sat down, Ron immediately started to whisper angrily.

“Where were you? You disappeared without a word!”

Whispering back, a bit annoyed, Harry fought down a frown.

“I went out for a bit, I needed to be alone.”

Understanding passed in his old friend's eye, but some annoyance persisted.



“Well, could you tell me next time? I was worried you had disappeared again.”

Some guilt washed through Harry, but he wasn't a naughty four year-old that had to be watched 24/7.

“I will Ron, but I had to get out of there for a moment.”

“You were gone for hours Harry!”

“Ron, Drop it, please.”

The red-head was about to speak, when a sharp kick in his ribs from Ginny, who was sitting on his other side, shut him up, drawing an indignant face from the youngest Weasley boy.

“Ginny!” A look from the young girl shut him up effectively.

The youngest Weasley returned her gaze on Harry.

She had had a crush on Harry, a huge crush, if not to say she had been obsessed with him and the time he had spent at her parents' house had only deepened it. After all, he was a hero and his sweet personality was a bonus. And then he had saved her. How could she have resisted? But now as she looked at him, she couldn't sense the usual butterflies in her stomach. It wasn't her Harry. No, he had changed into this cold person, no longer displaying his emotions. He was darker, more mysterious and powerful. Yes, he might not show it but he was. She shot a look at Colin. The boy was staring at Harry. Sensing someone's gaze on him, he turned to face her. She gave him a sharp nod, holding one finger up. He returned the nod, before going back to his hyper self. She got back to her Harry-staring. She trusted Colin. Both of them had been trained well, they wouldn't slip.

Ginny was not the only one watching Harry, in fact most of those present in the hall were sneaking glances at him every now and then.

Hermione was aware of this and of the growing unease that crept on Harry's face no matter how much he tried to hide it. But she was too tired to do much about it. She had been sleeping for most of the day, and would take a short nap before the junior's order meeting. It had



taken her all her will to stop herself from taking a sip of her potion this morning instead of sleeping. Maybe Harry had been right.... Even now, her body was aching, asking for some rest either natural or magical like the potion.

She dismissed these thoughts as dinner ended. She got up with only one thought in mind: Sleeping.

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Harry looked at Hermione's departing back. He hoped she'd be alright, but now, he had more pressing matters to attend. After a brief word to Ron, not wanting to send him berserk again, he made his way to the Gargoyle guarding the Headmaster's office and settled on guessing the password.

Fifteen minutes later and quite a large number of sweets, he was ready to blast the statue into next week.

"Skittles" said someone behind him.

Whirling on his heels, Harry came face to face with a sneering Potion master.

Without a word, the man stalked through the entrance, ignoring the teen. Shrugging, he followed the professor into the Headmaster office.

As usual, the office was filled with strange and odd looking knick-knack and Fawkes was preening his feather on his perch.

Silently, Harry walked up to the bird, lightly petting him.

"I do believe he love to be scratched on the back of his head."

Harry didn't move, to every outsider watcher, not in the least surprised by the unexpected voice, whereas his heart was currently residing in his throat.

"Headmaster?" he said, scratching the aforementioned spot on Fawkes, earning a soft thrill of contentment from the magical bird. He didn't notice the sharp glance the Potion master sent his way.



“Good evening, Harry.”

“Good evening Professor.”

“Is there a problem?”

With a last scratch, Harry turned on his heels, handing the aging wizard a thick envelop.

“No professor, could you make sure Fleur and her family get this?”

Nodding, Dumbledore took the package, placing neatly on his desk.

“Anything more?”

At this, Harry hesitated, glancing at Snape.

Taking out his wand, he started to trace letters of fire in the air, not unlike those of the memory of Tom Marvolo Riddle.

*I need to speak with you about what happened 20 000 years ago.*

At this, Dumbledore’s face darkened and he sneaked a glance at Snape. Taking his own wand, the Headmaster traced some letters.

*This will show you what you need to know.*

With another flick of his wand, he summoned a thick volume and handed it to Harry, before tracing new words.

*Beware, Harry, knowledge is a double-edged sword.*

Nodding, Harry took it, glancing quickly at the title, and then doing a double take.

The Dumbledore’s Chronicles.

He looked up to his Headmaster.

“Sir...”

“No Harry, you’ll need this to understand.”



With an uneasy nod of agreement, Harry went to a corner of the room, sitting on a couch and opening the book. Sensing his lack of comfort, Fawkes flew to him, perching himself on one arm of the couch. How could Dumbledore let him read this?! Family Chronicles were records of the history of every family member. The recording was magically done and couldn't be falsified. That was why the chronicles were most of the times hidden or heavily warded against intrusion, as they most of the time held dark secrets of the family.

Looking at the first page, Harry saw it was a glossary. Skipping through it, he finally found the part of interest to him. Putting his finger on said part, he turned to the second pages, the desired information now written.

The Parting.

And he read and read, and read, until his eyes went red, his eyelids got heavier and heavier. He read, forgetting where he was, when he was.

He read as the incident happened, as discrimination grew, as violence reach new heights. He read as the first human was killed and as started the downward spiral which would led to the creation of Muggles.

*“ They did it, I can't believe it. I, Wilfred Armand Dumbledore, attest of the deed committed on this day by the Three Others. Using deceit and trickery, they lead us to believe their false offer of peace between us to back-stabbed us to this day. Four fifth of our people were stripped on this day of the power which was theirs by the rights of their birth. Few communities escaped them. And if that wasn't enough, they wiped the memory of most of us of their existence, to destroy any evidence of their crime, and parted the lands, separating themselves from us. Even fewer of us escaped it. Our world is in shambles. I fear what tomorrow will bring....”*

*“They set our world on the path of self destruction. The few of us who managed to keep their powers are held as responsible for this disaster. Today I saw a couple and their daughter who were caught by a group of powerless ones. They went crazy with the loss of their abilities, of a part of themselves. They beat the man to death, forcing*



*his wife and child to witness it, then lynched the two of them. I couldn't do anything, they were too many of them and I was alone. I couldn't even save the little girl. I can't get their faces out of my head and I know their screams will haunt me for the rest of my life...."*

*"The surviving magical communities went into hiding, as the Powerless ones, or Muggles as we now call them. But not before exacting our revenge on those who condemned us to a life in the shadow, a life where we would be always plagued by the danger to be found. Our children will grow up in a world of darkness, fear and resentment. This called for revenge, and revenge we got.*

*Today, was gathered the strongest circle of Enchanters, Sorcerers, Mages, Warlocks: ten men and ten women, the strongest among us. Each Element was represented; dark, light magic was combined. The balance was perfect. We cast the curse and it was successful. They say revenge is a dish best served cold and I find it fitting. They might not feel the curse's effect immediately but come the years and they will see it, without being able to do a thing about it. Now comes the beauty of this curse as long as the blood of one of the member of this circle will live on, our revenge won't be broken. They took a part of ourselves and ripped it from most of us, let's see how they will fare on the other side of the barrier!..."*

*"Today, the first effects of our curse were made apparent. I found it fitting that those who scorn us are now quite alike to us. Isn't it quite ironic. The enchantment struck them in their inner core. They never expected us to be able to retaliate when they were so few of us left. They underestimated us, but they will regret their treachery. Reanna of the Almarez clan was the one to design it. Nobody can measure to her genius when it comes to the creation of spells or enchantments."*

The recording then launched itself in a description of the effects of the curse that left Harry thoughtful. Nobody knew or would ever know who was truly responsible for the disaster which had led to the Parting, but even if the Elves, Magis and Elementals had struck the first blow on a large scale, the Humans had their part of responsibility in the whole mess. Even if their revenge was fitting in a way, it only worsened the situation.



Indeed, the curse had attacked the tune those races had with a particular part of the world. In the elves case it had nearly severed their link with nature as well as their natural empathy, while lowering even more their birth rate. Without their natural empathy and tuning to nature to anchor them and only the gift of empathy which varied greatly depending of the individual, the Elven people had no way to counter balance the feeling of superiority and arrogance their life expectancy could provide them.

The same could be said for the Magis since the enchantment reduced considerably their tuning to Magic. Another hard blow for the Children of Magic was that the curse blinded them to the magical pattern of each individual. They could still see the auras, but it wasn't enough to ensure the thriving of their people.

This was due to the fact that to have a stable child, a Magis couple had to have compatible magical pattern. As they got blind to them, they could no longer find perfect match, thus the birth of children who died in their early, either killed by their own magic or by their inability to control the flows passing through them. Another alternative was the birth of mentally unstable youths.

As he got to that part, Harry's thoughts wandered to Garth. Was the teenaged Magis completely responsible of his crimes then? Shaking his head, he dismissed those thoughts. Now was not the time to ponder on this.

He resumed his reading.

The elementals had been affected in a similar way, but not as deeply as the other races. Their grasp on their element was lessened considerably, allowing more accidents to happen.

In the three cases, the curse creating, by taking away a part of what they were, a huge feeling of loss, more or less pronounced, depending of the effects of the curse on each individual: the deeper the dislike against humans, the deeper the loss. And in every case this feeling was associated to humans.

Those of Ynris had always had strong link with human, thus the open-mindedness of those staying there.



Finally he closed the book and looked up to face the somber face of Albus Dumbledore.

“So, Harry, now, you know...”

The black-haired young man locked eyes with the aging headmaster and nodded.

“Yes, I know....”

Without saying more, he handed the book back to Dumbledore and left not saying more, this had left him much to think about.

--

Harry walked straight to his dorm, it was well past curfew and he didn't want to wake anybody. He snuck into Gryffindor's common room with ease, putting his training to use and silently climbed up to the fifth year boy dorm. Without making a sound and using lights, he changed and went to bed, closing his eyes but not going to sleep. He needed to talk to Teneb.

He fell easily into a light trance and reached the First plane.

Finally here?

He turned and faced Arxeren, rolling his eyes.

“Yes, but I found myself quite busy....”

Don't matter, I'll warn Kaelia, Teneb is quite anxious to speak to you.

This immediately alarmed Harry.

“Why?”

He'll tell you.

A few minutes later, Teneb appeared at his side and Harry couldn't stop a smile from forming on his face. They clasped their right forearms together in salute, no words needed.



“How are things going, Teneb?”

The elf's face darkened.

“Not well... Our arrival might be postponed slightly. We should be there by the end of next week.”

Harry pondered on this... it would mean that a part of the school would be gone by then. Well, it might be better this way.

He voiced his opinion but couldn't lighten Teneb's mood.

“Well, at least one good thing will come out of this mess.” He said somberly.

Harry frowned at the tone of voice used by his blood brother. Even in his spirit form, Teneb seemed to be on edge.

“What happened?”

With a sigh, Teneb willed two chairs to appear. They had discovered thorough their training that they could influence on their surrounding while in the plane and had been taking advantage of this since then. They both sat and Harry waited for Teneb to start.

As soon as they were settled, Teneb launched himself into an account of the day's event.

Apparently, Valera was encountering a lot of opposition and her status of Regent was heavily contested. Doryan, Demenor, Celen and Reald were doing their best to help her, but her decisions weren't going over well with the population. The Elders of the Magis, while agreeing to help stop the ritual Voldemort was about to do, didn't want to have more to do with humans, the Elementals were siding with them, but were more likely to be persuaded of taking measures if the need arose. The Council was completely divided and the opposition side was much stronger. The dissension was also present among the Elves. Those of Ynris mostly supported Valera. At Horevald, a small minority was agreeing with the Regent, out of fidelity to the crown more than real faith in her decision. But the majority was disapproving her actions, despite the fact that the



Dragons themselves had asked for some of them. Opheria and Kobalt had apparently sided with Teneb and this made Harry relieved to know that at least he wasn't alone in this mess. What made him thoughtful was what Teneb reported about Djaryle. The young elvish girl was spending her days in the Royal Library, going through old prophecy book and ancient charms. Why, he didn't know and she remaining closed mouth about it.

Thoughts of Djaryle always brought uneasy feelings in Harry. On one hand they had seemed to hit off really well, and that's what made him uncomfortable, why would he have immediately trusted her. After all, he had never seen her before... But she was reminding him of Ron and Hermione a lot..... His mind went a bit fuzzy as he tried to think this over and he dismissed it, focusing back on what Teneb was saying.

There had been protest starting in Horevald. There had been no violence so far, but the monarchs were afraid the situation would worsen. Despite the usual peaceful nature of the elves, the curse of the humans had decreased their repulsion of violence which added to the deep resentment between the races could lead to an explosive result.

Harry could read between the lines, they were fearing an uprising... And for all of their sakes he wished he was wrong.

Teneb switched to less unpleasant topic. By the end of the next week, on Friday afternoon, which meant in seven days, the punished masters, plus a few others would come. The students wishing to join their families or guardians for the holidays would be gone on Friday morning. Najira, Reald, Halan and Teneb would come with them; Djaryle, Opheria and Kobalt would stay with Celen to insure his protection and help him.

Several scholars from the three races would also come along with a circle of six. Harry was also relieved to hear that the block he placed on Najira was holding... The dark haired boy sighed in relief. Now, he only hoped Fleur or one of her acquaintance would be able to deal with the half sister of Celen.



They talked a bit more, but Harry noticed that Teneb's spiritual form was dimming.

"Teneb, you should go, you're fading."

The black-haired elf raked a hand through his hair.

"You're probably right..."

"I always am"

"In your dream, Astyan."

Harry smiled, he liked that name, but he wouldn't dream of telling it to anyone, it would give too much power over himself. He stood up.

"Rest my friend, we'll talk more later."

"I think I'll follow your advise. I probably won't be able to talk to you before I came back to your world. It's getting more dangerous to lower your mental shield here...."

"Take care Teneb"

"You too Harry."

With that, they parted. Once he was back to his body, Harry realized he had forgotten to tell Teneb about what he had just learned. Mentally hitting himself, he vowed to tell him at the first occasion before going to sleep.

--

As Harry went through the past, in the Room of requirement, teenagers were planning for the future. The Junior Order was gathered, but this time quite a few member of the official Order were present: Pr. McGonagall, Mad-Eye Moody...

For once, they weren't training and all the members were present. It had been decided the day before that after getting all the members to sign a confidentiality contract, drawn by one of the adult members,



the Junior order would be told of the arrival of the other races to help keep the remaining students in control.

It took half an hour for everybody to arrive to the room. Once everyone was settled, McGonagall took the lead of the meeting.

“Good evening, students. This meeting was called due to the circumstances surrounding Mr. Potter. But before I say more, we’ll ask you to sign this contract of silence. You are aware of the consequences, should you break it.” Her face was drawn and business like.

There were nods around the room.

“Good, then sign it.”

She handed a piece of parchment to the closest youth and watch it as it circulated around the room, silently amused of the typical behavior of each house. The Hufflepuffs were signing it without reading, as where most of the Gryffindors. The Ravensclaws were examining the parchment, trying to decipher the charms placed on it and reading it briefly. The Slytherins were reading attentively before signing. Finally she got it back and counted the number of signatures, after counting the number of students present. Satisfied, she secured the parchment by banishing it back to the headmaster’s office.

“Now, I will let Mr. Weasley and Miss Granger explain what took place yesterday. I ask you to remain silent during their explanations. Questions will be asked once they’re done.”

She nodded to the two teenagers and Hermione started to speak. It had been decided that she would do most of the explanations with Ron occasional input.

For an hour, she described the people accompanying Harry, where he had stayed, what he had been trained to be. She did not mention the abuse he had suffered.

“In a few days, some of the masters and other people from each race will come to Hogwarts. They will assess the situation and decide of



the best course of action for their people.” As Hermione paused, the room erupted with noise.

“What!”

“Elves!”

“Impossible!”

McGonagall had her lips pursed but couldn’t resist looking around the room. The Slytherins members caught her eyes by their calm. But then they rarely lost their cool appearance. They were talking quietly to each other. While the Gryffindors, Hufflepuffs and some younger Ravenclaws were shouting excitedly. The older members from the House of Rowena were discussing calmly, much like the Slytherins.

Suddenly silence fell on the room.

Every eye turned to Hermione who was standing, her wand raised, and a hand massaging her temples while yawning. Her eyes were bloodshot and the lack of the Entropian potion was making her patience thin.

“Silence, ask your question one by one. Clock-wise starting by Michel. If you don’t have question, pass your turn.” She lifted the spell and motioned to the seventeen year-old French student to start the first round of question.

They kept on like this for two hours. Finally the adults who had been staying in the background until then stepped forwards. The gruff voice of Mad-Eye Broke through the room.

“Now, listen. You’ll be responsible for keeping the other students out of our visitors’ way. We’re going to keep the contacts between us and them at a minimum, unless they ask for it. Meeting adjourned, tomorrow, same hour, we’ll go over the shifts and your tasks.”

“Will Potter join us, now that he is back.”

Hermione and Ron shared a doubtful glance before looking at their Transfiguration teacher.



“This remains to be seen. His status of rider will ask him to work with the other riders. He will be asked, but I don’t think he will.”

There were a few mutters at this as the room started to emptied itself.

Unnoticed, Blaise Zabini stayed behind and waited for the others to leave.

Once only Hermione, Ron and the adults were left, he approached the two teenagers.

“Now, Granger, care to tell what you omitted to say during this meeting?”

Hermione gave him an exhausted look before glancing at the adult who nodded.

“Simple, Zabini. Most of the members of the other races dislike humans or are highly discriminated against us. That’s why there’ll be minimal contacts.”

“What about the ministry?”

“The Headmaster is taking care of it.”

With a small nod, the Slytherin left and headed straight to his dorms. As he pondered on the information he had just been privy to, Potter’s behavior made a bit more sense, but he wanted more information on the Gryffondor Golden Boy. He wasn’t going to bet his life on an unknown entity. Potter was now a wild card. Before his departure, he had been known for his particular skills on the pitch and in DADA. But what of know? Blaise knew he had powers. But what they were, that remained to be seen. He would have to talk to his housemates. They would observe for now before taking any decision. Let the Gryffindor dive headfirst. The Slytherins who had sided with him hadn’t survived so far by being foolish.

--

Thanks again to all of you who reviewed this story. I hope you enjoyed this chapter.



For the next ones: Arrival of the Masters, Ministry's visit. More Draco, Snape, news about Sirius...

Naia

By the way, I'll put the characters' list at the end of some chapters, I think every five chapters, so that it doesn't break the new rules of .

### Elves :

Teneb Ildar Oreansky: Harry's blood brother, son of Doryan and Ysela, brother of Delia, Best friend of Celen and Djaryle, rider of Gae: Emnag, Athar, air gifted.

Celen Soryan Ikerstorm-Vyriannight: Prince of the Elves, son of Enrys and Valera, half brother of Najira, Teneb's best friend.

Djaryle: childhood friend of Teneb, possesses a bit of the Sight, to a small degree.

Demenor : leader of the Headquarter, rider of Ulras, an Azurean

Doryan: Teneb and Delia's father, husband of Ysela, High Counsellor.

Ysela: Teneb and Delia's mother, Doryan's wife, friend of Valera, comes from Ynris

Enrys Olban Ikerstorm: King of Elves, husband of Valera, twin brother of Reald, father of Celen and Najira.

Valera Ryll Vyriannight: Queen of the Elves, then Regent, wife of Enrys, mother of Celen, friend of Ylesa, comes from Ynris

Reald Eldir Ikerstorm: Twin brother of Enrys

Inir: Daryn, former friend of Teneb, rider of a Quear, earth gifted.

Vlad: Daryn, friend of Garth

Xjahl: Daryn, friend of Garth

Malisa: Daryn, former friend of Teneb, rider of an Azurean, firee gifted



Arnelle: Daryn, former friend of Teneb, rider of a Dawnris

Kario: rider, mentor's of Teneb

Effilin: rider, Fighting master

Edevia: rider, Archery's mistress

Lienhor: rider, Horses' master

Haram: rider, fire gifted

Jeesala: rider, fire gifted

Garan: rider, fire gifted

Ferin: rider, fire gifted

Kassim: rider, fire gifted

Téal: rider, fire gifted

Zeld: rider, Garth's mentor

Cya: Xhana, leader of the Doijas.

Jesen Tarenhils: Counsilar, leader of the Belan (faction: neutral leaning on conservative)

Toran: Counsilar, Leader of the Hylmeans: faction: neutral, leaning towards changements)

Gojik: an old courtier

Elga: a Doija

Tyldan: a Deiser

Eryn: orphan, ward of the Temples, twelve, stable boy

Ferim: Counsilar.



Luctan: Dark Elf

Magis:

Garth: Daryn, son of Jaris and Ilia

Opheria: Daryn, friend of Teneb, rider of Nelan, a Dusker

Sarwin: Magic's master

Keal: Counsilors, leader of the conservative faction: the Aldyrs

Halan: One of the elders of the Magis

Elementals:

Kobalt: Daryn, Water elemental, friend of Teneb, rider of Polath, a Dewat

Chrisianne: Daryn, Air elemental, friend of Garth

Ribor: Daryn, Earth elemental, friend of Garth.

Nerthor: Air Elemental, rider, Mind magic's master

Luan: Water Elemental, Xhan, leader of the Deiser, Solyen's representant.

Ulthon: Counsilar, Air Elemental, leader of the revolution faction: the Oyeras.

Dwarfs:

**Terio**

Anok

Dragons:

Rexeran: Sowaroc, elder, bonded with Harry

Gae: Emnag, elder, bonded with Teneb



Altai: Azurean, elder

Aurine: Dawnris, elder

Phaïst: Firelans, elder

Cehra: Quear, elder

Dia: Wiscand, elder

Seid: Dewat, elder

Ulras: Azurean, bonded with Demenor

Polath: Dewat, bonded with Kobalt

Nelan: Dusker, bonded with Opheria

### Guardians

Arxeren: Sowaroc form, Harry's guardian

Kaelia: Emnag's form, Teneb's guardian

Karzan: Arxeren's acquaintance

### Veela, Part Veela:

Najira Tyra Hoersen: bastard daughter of King Enrys, half sister of Celen

Fleur Delacour

Gabrielle Delacour

### Hogwarts students:

Frederik Million: Slytherin student, fifth year prefect

Irene Davin: Hufflepuff

Maria Doyle: Hufflepuff, animagus form: colibri



Maxim Kendal: Hufflepuff, animagus form: bear

Susan Bones: Hufflepuff, animagus form: butterfly

Ernie McMillan: Hufflepuff, animagus form: horse

Seamus Finnigan: Gryffindor, animagus form: dog

Hermione Granger: Gryffindor, animagus form: sphinx, prefect

Ronald Weasley: Gryffondor, animagus form: tiger, prefect

Neville Longbottom: Gryffindor, animagus: eagle

Blaise Zabini: fifth year Slytherin prefect

Parvati Patil

Dean Thomas

Lavender Brown

George Weasley

Fred Weasley

Ginny (Virginia) Weasley

Colin Creevey

Dennis Creevey

Lee Jordan

Justin Finch-Fletchey

Hannah Abbots

Padma Patil

Terry Boots



Luna Lovegood

Cho Chang

Mandy Blockehurst

Vincent Crabbe

Gregory Goyle

Draco Malfoy

Pansy Parkinson

Millicent Bultstrode

*Death Eaters*

Nott Sr.

Avery

Fenrson

Lucius Malfoy : member of the Inner Circle

Rodolphe Lestrangle : member of the Inner Circle, Torturer

Bellatrix Lestrangle : member of the Inner circle, wife of Rodolphe

Deran: Potion Novice

Yvan Roval: Member of the Inner Circle

Zanya Roval: wife of Yvan, member of the Inner circle

Hopkins: Researcher

Justus: Torturer

Keldan: Torturer



Isam: Trainer

McNair

Nathael Valdon: Dark erudite, specialist of Dark rituals and artefacts

Jan Girtshenka: Dark erudite, translator, specialist of Blood Magic and Dark artefacts

Order of the Phoenix:

Mundungus Fletcher

Moody Mad-Eye

Arthur Weasley

Molly Weasley

Arabella Figg

Remus Lupin

Sirius Black

Severus Snape

Poppy Pomfrey

Selina Allan: French Nurse

Sophie Colin: French Deputy Headmistress, Muggle Studies teacher

Bruno Dupont : French Runes Teacher

Gerard Martin : French Charm teacher

Aurelie Durand : French Transfiguration teacher, Co-Head of Slytherin

Dan Jenkins : Physical Defense teacher, Co-Head of Slytherin



Karl Terensky: Bulgarian Potions Teacher

Zora Ferenskaya: Bulgarian Divination teacher

Minerva McGonagall

Filius Flitwick

Anna Sinistra

Mme Olympe Maxime: French Headmistress

Rubeus Hagrid

Amos Diggory

Others:

Charlie Weasley

Bill Weasley

Percy Weasley

Cornelius Fudge

Ludo Bagman

Argus Filch

Dark

Doeron

Djaira

Wlad Gildren aka Grindelwald



## **Chapter Twenty Three**

The next morning, an insistent pecking on the window woke him up, a bit earlier than he was used to. Groggily, he sat up, rubbing his eyes and opened his curtains, his eyes falling immediately on a snowy owl waiting at the window.

“Hedwig,” he whispered and soundlessly made his way to his old feathery friend.

As soon as he had opened the window, the owl had flown to his shoulder and was hooting lowly while nipping his ear not too gently as if scolding him for leaving her behind.

“Sorry, Hedwig, but I didn’t really have a choice in this matter,” he apologized, caressing the smooth feathers on the top of his owl’s head. He was happy to see that whoever had taken care of his owl had done a good job. She was healthy and seemed content. He noticed a note stuck to her leg and took it, unrolling the small piece of parchment.

*To whoever will receive this letter.*

*The owl is called Hedwig. For the past days, she has been restless and so persistent in her desire to leave that she nearly hurt herself. We don’t know what is calling her, though we have a fairly good idea of what might be the cause of her odd behavior.*

*Take good care of her.*

*PS: Prongs jr., if it’s you who is reading this, you better have a damn good explanation to give us...*

*Snuffle*

Harry smiled widely. Sirius! This was a note from Sirius, and he assumed that the ‘we’ meant he and Remus. They were alright! The fate of his godfather had been one of his greatest worries so far and knowing that they were fine had taken a weight from his chest.



Feeling energized, he got ready for his morning training, knowing that Arxeren would have his hide if he so much think of skipping it.

He left a note on his bedpost, telling he was going for a walk around the lake, fairly sure that his friends would see it. Once he was dressed in his usual training clothes, he summoned his weapons, not bothering with his wand. As he was about to leave, he heard a small yawn and whirled to see Lucky wake up. Shaking his head, he approached the small ginger fox and taking him in his arms, brought him to Hedwig for her to examine. At first the owl was scared out of her wits, and only the silencing charm Harry hurriedly threw around him prevented her from waking the whole dorm. He heard Dean stir a little as well as Neville shifting somewhat in his bed. Finally he managed to get Hedwig to calm down enough for her to stand still as he introduced the two animals to each other. Lucky's first action, was unfortunately to try to hit and bite the edible looking bird in front of him, something which didn't go too well with Hedwig who pecked the insolent baby fox, earning pained yips from the red animal.

"Now, now.... Be good, both of you...." Harry was smiling faintly at Hedwig smug look as she shot a disgruntled glance at him. "Hedwig, this is Lucky, he's going to stay with us, he's still very young, so we'll have to keep an eye on him, OK."

The bird shot him a wary glance, as if to say: 'us? Keep an eye on him? I'm the one who's going to end as a fox' snack!' With a small laugh, Harry soothed the ruffled feather of his older familiar.

"He'll learn, Hedwig, we all will..." Then he turned to the fox which was still eyeing the owl with a greedy look. "As for you, no eating owls, they're off limits, undertood?" The fox cocked his head towards him.

Not really trusting the fox, Harry wandlessly put a charm on him which would give the small beast a little shock each time he would try to attack an owl. After all, he didn't want to have to explain to some students why their owls had disappeared.

Once sure the charm was in place, he left the dorm, silent as a shadow, Lucky trotting on his heels, the soft padding of his paws on the cool stone being the only sound audible. Both of them made their way out, Hedwig resting quietly on her perch.



He let his ginger friend wander around as he slowly started his warm-up exercises, being careful to stretch every muscles. He didn't fancy hurting himself while training. As he did so, he started to think about what he would have to do. First, he'd have to see Dumbledore about the state of the war: while he had a good idea of it as far as Voldemort was concerned, he knew next to nothing about what the Ministry had planned. He would have to meet the Minister and various officers, there was no escaping this. The only upside of it was that Fudge wasn't minister any longer, but he wasn't sure about facing Amos Diggory. Then there was the junior order... Could he join them? Would he be able to work with them? He wasn't so sure about it. As he finished his last series of exercises, he took his sword and started his routine, while resuming his thinking.

He didn't know if he really belonged there anymore. Hogwarts had been his home, his haven for four years, even with Voldemort set on killing him. But he couldn't go back there and settle back in his Golden boy persona. He had changed too much for that. What would happen if he was to join the junior order? He pondered this for a few minutes. He would be expected to lead them, but at the same time they wouldn't trust him to decide for them. It would also mean that he would have to dismiss their previous leaders to take their place and he would be resented for popping out of nowhere and expect everyone to follow his orders.

No, it was better if he didn't join. To do otherwise would create more problems than they needed at the moment. They had no use for internal quarrels while a war was going on.

He accelerated his movements, and passed his sword to his left hand while taking out his wand and summoning a dummy to practice again. Tucking his wand back up his sleeve, he took his sword back in his right hand and lunged at the translucent fighter who parried the blow aimed at his head.

This dummy was one that was always a level above Harry. It was done to push him to his limits and improve.

Harry kept exchanging blows with the smoky figure until he felt him take advantage of a small opening in his guard. He tried to block, but



it was too late and seconds later his sword was jerked from his hand and the smoke-made blade of the practice dummy stopped millimeters away from his neck.

With a sigh, Harry muttered the disactivating password and went to pick his sword up. Sheathing it, he started to work on his dagger, then his knife-throwing. Once he was finished with it, he picked up his blades. He stood up and after checking them, tucked them back in their usual place. Seeing he had still a bit of time left, he decided to have another go at the sword. He had been fighting for a few minutes already when he was distracted by a small disturbance in his proximity wards. It was enough for the dummy to attack and knock his sword out of his hand, sending him to the ground and stopping once more his sword millimeters from Harry's neck.

Annoyed at having been defeated again, Harry banished his opponent and stood up. Looking around, he didn't spot anybody in the close vicinity who could have triggered it. That meant one thing: Invisibility charms or cloak. Taking his wand, mentally cursing the necessity of having to use it, he cast quickly a reveling charm and a summoning one. Sure enough, two cloaks flew in his hand, revealing four people looking at him with expression ranging from guilty to impressed or blank.

"Ron, Zabini, Padma, Justin, good morning," he greeted coolly, he really disliked people sneaking up on him, since most of the time he tended to react first then think. He finished examining his blade and happy to see no dent in it, he sheathed it before returning his attention to the group before him. "Is there any reason you're here, invisible might I add, or were you just out for a quick stroll?"

"Morning, to you too, Potter, nice weather, isn't it?" said Zabini, speaking.

"Spare me the pleasantries, Zabini and get to the point."

The Slytherin seemed amused at Harry's rebuke.

"Alright Potter, straight to the point. The three of them as well as myself are leaders for our year group in the junior Order..."



“We’d like to know if you’d be willing to join us, Harry,” finished Ron, earning a glare from Blaise who didn’t seem to like being interrupted.

Harry looked at them, the four houses united, that was something he never thought possible... He looked at Ron.

“What I fail to see is why you’re asking a question when you know what my answer will be...”

Padma smiled grimly.

“You won’t join then.” It was more a statement than a question.

Harry nodded.

“I would cause more troubles than help you. But I will work with you, if you accept my help.”

Zabini smirked.

“As if we would refuse it, Potter.”

Nobody spoke for a few moments. They looked at each other, trying to assess each other.

“Is there any proof you’re who you say you are, Potter?” finally said Justin.

Harry shrugged.

“Not really, I have my scar if it is proof enough for you. Professor Dumbledore will vouch for me if need be, but in the end you’ll have to trust me on this.”

The answer seemed to satisfy Justin who handed his hand to Harry.

“Good to have you back with us Potter.”

With a small smile, Harry took it and gave it a shake before releasing it.

“Good to be back, Justin.”



Harry had no choice but to follow them as they left, promising himself to stretch once back in the dorm, or else he would pay for it later. He had barely walked for a few seconds when he remembered Lucky. Cursing lowly, he muttered a few words and a disgruntled fox appeared at his feet. The ginger beast was definitively not happy and proved it as she sank his small teeth in Harry's ankles. Small maybe, but still sharp. Harry winced and picked Lucky up.

He ignored the surprised looks on the others' face, except for Ron who had already seen the small fox.

"What's this?" asked Padma.

"A fox," stated Harry.

"Thanks for stating the obvious, I can see it's a fox. What are you doing with it?" The Ravenclaw was a bit annoyed.

"I've been taking care of it, its parents were killed and I found him. His name is Lucky."

"He's been vaccinated, hasn't he? I heard foxes conveyed all kind of diseases, like rabies," Padma was eyeing the animal with distrust.

"He's perfectly safe and healthy."

They didn't speak more on their way back to the castle. Looking at his watch, Harry saw he still had an hour before breakfast. They parted ways in the hall, Ron and Harry walking silently back to their tower. Upon entering, they found Hermione sleeping in the couch.

Ron smiled indulgently.

"She's trying to do so much by herself... I think she's doing too much... But she won't listen, she's too stubborn."

Harry eyed his friend and frowned.

"Are you two... together?"

Ron eyed him.



“What would it be to you if we were?” he said, his voice a bit tensed.

Harry met his eyes frankly.

“I would be happy for you, even if I thought it wouldn’t last.”

Ron smirked.

“That’s good.... But no, we’re not together, she’s my honorary sister, as weird as she can get.” He smiled as he looked at the sleeping girl.

“I’ll take her to her dorm.”

“Alright, I’ll stretch a bit, you interrupted me before I could do it.”

Ron turned towards him as he was about to climb up to the girls dorm, something his prefect’s status allowed him to do.

“By the way, how did you manage to learn to fight like this? We arrived at the end of your fight. It was wicked! I didn’t know you could learn so fast!”

Harry lips tightened in a false smile as he answered.

“I had help.”

*More than you can imagine*, he thought as he started stretching while Ron brought Hermione back to her bed, not forgetting her bag and notes.

This had been a sore point for him. He had asked Arxeren once how he was able to learn this so easily. The guardian had admit having interfered in his progress. To quote his words, he had “just given him a push”. Harry snorted, a push, that was an understatement. He had enhanced his abilities to learn and remember, improved his muscles’ adaptability. Even if Arxeren had told him that he would have reached this level with more time, Harry still felt like he had cheated. Teneb knew of this, since Kaelia had done the same for him. At first, Harry wouldn’t hear of it and had asked Arxeren to bring him back to the level he would have had, had the guardian not interfered. He remembered this argument very well...



You're not mulling about this again!

Good morning to you too, Arxeren. I'm sorry, but this really bugs me.

If I had known you would be so thick-headed about it, I wouldn't have told you what I did!

I still think I cheated...

Harry, we went over this countless times. You need those skills and we don't have enough time for you to learn them at your pace. Those are only the abilities you would have developed with more time! I didn't give you new ones!

You'd better not have done it!

You would have reached this degree of skills sooner or later, but it would have taken more time, something we don't have. I'm sorry if it hurts your pride, but there are things more important at stakes. And I thought we had an agreement. I told you, as soon as this is over, I'll bring your abilities back to the level they would have been, had I not helped you along and then you'll take all the time you want to master your abilities back.

Yes, we agreed on that... and I didn't need the full speech once more!

Then, why are you ressassing it!

Because it's not fair!

This is a war! This not about fairness! Do you think the Dark Lord play fair! He drains some of his followers and use the power derived from tortures to enhance his own!

This silenced Harry.

Harry, I want you to understand that I did this to help you...

I know, I know... you did the right thing, Arxeren, I just have a hard time accepting it, that's all.



There was a small silence.

Teneb won't be able to talk to you before coming back. The situation is getting more and more complicated at Horevald, it's not safe for him to leave his mental wards down... particularly in his case. The masters will arrive at noon at the end of the week. Najira will be with them.

Thanks for the warning...

No problem, now go take a shower and take care!

With that, the presence of the guardian disappeared.

Smiling, Harry finished his stretching then went to the dorm to shower and change. Twenty minutes later, he was in the common room with Ron, both of playing a game of Exploding Snap, waiting for Hermione. Finally they heard someone coming down hurriedly, but as they looked up, it was Lavender and Parvati.

The two girls walked to them, a worried look on their face.

"Sorry to bother you, but we think something is wrong with Hermione. We tried to wake her up, you know how she is if she happens to be late, but nothing seems to work," said Lavender.

"Can I go see her?" said Harry. "I need one of you girls with me or the permission of a prefect..."

"Come, I'll protect you from our wards," said Parvati, smirking.

Nodding, Harry followed his fellow Gryffindor in the girls' territory. They entered the fifth year's dorm and Parvati led him to Hermione's bed. Their dorm was similar to the boy one. The color theme was different and there were fewer beds, but all in all it was pretty much the same.

Once Parvati had shown him his friend's bed, he opened the curtains. Hermione was lying on the bed, she was pale, her breathing shallow. Immediately fearing the worse, Harry leaned on her to take her pulse. It did nothing to ease his worry.



“Shit!” swore Harry. He turned towards Parvati. “Did she perform a lot of magic yesterday night?”

The girl thought for a few seconds.

“Quite a lot, apparently McGonagall and Moody decided to test a few members of...” she stopped, paling.

“I already know about the Order, go on.”

“Well, she was one of those tested, she came back completely worn out. At first Lavender and I thought she was going to pass out. We tried to help her, but she said it was nothing.”

Parvati frowned.

“Come to think about it, we should have insisted, but it was late, and Hermione is always so stubborn...”

Mentally, Harry was cursing Hermione to Hell. Why hadn’t she told McGonagall she wasn’t up to a testing! Damn the girl! Bending on the bed, he scooped her in his arms and started to run downstairs.

“Parvati, try to find a vial filled with a golden-colored potion and bring it to the Infirmary as soon as possible. It should be in her bed table.”

Not waiting for her answer, he made a start for Mrs. Pomfrey’s territory, telling Ron to come on his way out.

As they reached the Infirmary, Ron was panting slightly, but Harry was barely out of breath. He put Hermione on a bed and called for Madam Pomfrey.

The nurse came quickly and approached the bed.

“What happened, Mr Potter? I hope you didn’t manage to injure yourself so soon after your return.”

“It’s Hermione, madam; I think she’s in magical shock.”

Immediately, Madam Pomfrey started her diagnosis and as Harry had feared, it revealed a heavy depletion of Hermione’s energies’ levels,



both magical and normal, which had caused her body to go into shock.

Casting a few spells, the nurse stabilized her state.

“Do either of you know what caused this?! A few days more and she would have slipped in a magical coma.”

Harry knew he would pay for telling the nurse, but Hermione’s health was more important.

“She had been taking the Entropian potion for a while, but upon my return, I spotted the signs and convinced her of stopping. I didn’t think it was that bad... She had been sleeping a lot, so I thought she would be careful and recover, but apparently she had a heavy testing yesterday night...”

The woman looked disapprovingly at the young woman on the bed.

At this moment, Parvati entered, with a case filled with vials of the potion and handed them to Harry.

“Thanks Parvati.” The girls nodded then left.

He gave them to the nurse.

Taking a look at them, she muttered about foolish girls who should know better, then turned towards Harry.

“You should go, she’ll be awake in a few days, but she won’t be able to take her exams at the end of the week. I’ll talk to the Headmaster to schedule another session for her and a few others who won’t be able to take them either. Now, go! She’ll be back on her feet by the end of the week, but it’ll take her two weeks to get most of her powers back. I’ll inform the staff. ” Seeing Harry’s worried face. “I’ll only tell your Head of House and the Headmaster of the cause of Miss Granger’s problem.”

Harry nodded and dragged Ron out.

Parvati was waiting for them outside.



“She’ll be ok?”

“In a week or so.”

“But what about the OWLs?”

“She’ll pass them once she’ll be better,” said Ron, with a smile for Parvati who returned it.

“Good, but I wouldn’t like to be the one to announce it to her... Do you know what was wrong with her?”

“Well...” Ron hesitated.

“Madam Pomfrey wouldn’t tell. Maybe she took a potion which had been botched?” said Harry, hoping Ron would back his story. He was sure Hermione didn’t want everyone to know.

The three youths made their way to the Hall, and sat at Gryffindor table.

Munching on a toast, Harry looked as the owls started to fill the owl. He then noticed the Daily Prophet being delivered. One owl flew towards them and sat on the seat usually occupied by Hermione. Looking around, lost, the brown owl was about to fly away again, probably for the Infirmary when Harry caught it.

“I’ll give it to her... here,” he handed the owl a few knuts and moments later, the volatile was flying away.

With dread, Harry unfolded the wizarding newspaper. And as he had feared, standing out on the front-page, the head line couldn’t be missed.

### **BOY WHO LIVED BACK!!**

*Yesterday, Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts announced the return of Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived.*

*The young man had disappeared a year ago in circumstances which still remain unknown to our reporter. Witnesses reported that the*



*young man was in good health and apparently underwent some sort of training during his absence...*

*For the whole article, report page 3*

*For interviews of witnesses, report to page 5*

*For the Boy-who-lived's history, report page 6*

*For the comments from officials, report page 7*

Harry sighed.

So much for keeping a low profile.

Harry didn't bother to read the rest of the article. Folding it, he handed it to Ron, muttering something about seeing Dumbledore.

He hurried out of the hall, after noticing that the headmaster wasn't present and headed for his office.

Arriving in front of the Gargoyle, he gave the password that Snape had used yesterday.

"Skittles"

The statue sprang aside and he climbed up the flight of stair leading to Dumbledore's office. As he knocked on the door, he heard that several people were in the room.

"Enter"

Steeling himself, he took a deep breath and entered.

He stepped in the room, closed the door and came face to face with the five occupants of the room.

"Mr. Potter, come and sit," said the headmaster, for once, not wasting time and going straight to the point. "I was discussing your return with those gentlemen." He motioned to the four other men. "You already know Mr. Diggory, our new Minister, on his right is sitting Mr. Richardson, head of the Voluntary Wizarding Forces, or VWF for



shorter. Next to Mr. Richardson is Mr. Perry, head of the surviving Aurors and on the left of the Minister is Mr. Valyan, Head of the Unspeakable.”

The men nodded, each of them studying Harry. The young Athar could see that Valyan and Perry had their wands trained on him.

“So it’s indeed true, you’re back among us, Mr. Potter... then the cause of your disappearance that Albus told us must also be true... as ludicrous as it is....”

Harry sat on a chair and accepted the offer of a cup of tea Dumbledore made.

“Since I don’t know what you were told, I can’t deny or verify what he told you.”

Richardson didn’t seem to like his answer a lot...

“Don’t play with us, boy! He told us a fairytale story about elves, Magis, Elementals, Dragon riders!”

Harry took a sip of his tea. Mint.

“Then he told you the thruth.”

The four men stared at him.

“Tea, gentlemen?” said the Headmaster. They nodded numbly. “So Harry, if you could tell your story...”

Quickly, Harry retold his story, omitting a few parts which were irrevelant to the matter at end.

They remained silent for a few moments, reflecting on what they had just been told.

“So, now you’re... an Athar for those riders, aren’t you?” finally said Perry.

Harry nodded.



Perry looked about to faint.

“Ok, elves are real, magical dragons exist and can speak... tell me when I'll wake up... this dream is getting weirder and weirder...”

Diggory was eyeing Harry.

“Can we count on their help against Voldemort? I don't care if they have pointed ear, orange hair, transparent skin or the like as long as they can help us.”

Harry looked down and tried to find the better way to say it.

“Well... First you have to know, that those three races are heavily discriminated against us... you don't need to know the reason, but we shouldn't count on help from them to fight. A few of them are going to reside at Hogwarts for some time as a punishment, along with several scholars. They agreed to help prevent Voldemort from performing this ritual, but that's all.”

Twirling the tea in his cup, he took a new sip.

“They will help because this ritual threatens their existence too, but they won't fight for us,” he stated looking up at Cedric's father.

“Then, we'll have to do without them,” said Amos Diggory, “Because we won't surrender, too many have died already for it to be forgotten and forgiven.”

Harry nodded and then tried to answer to his best to the barrage of questions the four then fired at him. He was excused from his morning classes as the men tried to plan the stay of the guests, with the help of Harry and the input of the Headmaster. Well, much to Harry's annoyance, they tended to adopt a paternal attitude towards him, treating him like a wayward child most of the time, but were forced to listen to him since he was the only one knowing about the coming guests.

Finally, at noon, Harry was relieved to be dismissed as his stomach was making it known to him that he hadn't eaten enough at breakfast to allow himself to skip lunch.



The rest of the day passed uneventfully and he finally headed out, Lucky with him. He had decided that starting from now, the fox would stay with Hagrid during the day, since the little mischief maker had completely wrecked the dorm. He was going to introduce the two and then train for a few hours before going to sleep. On his way back to the castle, he stopped at the Infirmary. Hermione was still unconscious, but Mrs. Pomfrey told him she should be awake tomorrow afternoon.

Satisfied about his friend's fate, he walked to Gryffindor's tower. On his way back, he met students from Beaubâtons, Durmstrang going back to the Houses. The Four Houses had been expanded to host the new students and Harry had already spotted a few of them in Gryffindor. But unfortunately for him, Gabrielle Delacour had been one of those whose parents had decided to keep their children with them and home-school them.

The days passed. Hermione woke up and though a bit crossed at Harry for telling her secret, she was mostly horrified at the idea of being unable to take her OWLs with the other students. But as she noticed, her stunt had completely depleted her reserves as she was unable to perform a small Wingardium Leviosa. Madam Pomfrey had told her that she should be alright in a few weeks, after lengthily lecturing her about her carelessness, but that this could have long-term consequences on her magic.

Meanwhile, Harry worked on the accommodations of the masters and scholars. It had been decided they would live in the East wing where rooms would be prepared for their stay.

Thanks to his guardian, he was warned to expect eight scholars in addition to the masters. All in all, they would be hosting thirteen guests, plus Reald, Najira and Teneb. Hagrid had been asked to prepare stables and a paddock for the horses.

The week passed relatively quickly, if you overlooked the usual explosions, spell mishaps, Quidditch accidents which were the usual routine at the castle. Sure, Harry was plagued with letters from various newspapers and magazines, asking for interviews, as no reporters were foolish enough to risk their hide traveling to Hogwarts.



The students still didn't know how to act. Some were looking at him as a savior, others as a coward, as a fake, as a puzzle they'd like to answer....

Since their brief meeting while Harry had been training with his sword, Malfoy had kept his distance with the raven-haired wizard, observing him from afar with a confused expression. But the thing that got on Harry's nerve was the Ravenclaw and Slytherin upper year's behavior. They had instaurated a web of watchers which made it difficult for Harry to find time alone for his training.

Finally he got fed up after four days of it and stalked to the owlery.

The next day saw Hedwig land in front of Blaise. The young man unrolled the small bit of parchment and read it. The boy paled slightly and glanced up in Harry's direction to meet the boy's scowling face. Harry jerked his head towards the door as he stood up and left.

Minutes later, Blaise followed.

He had barely took a few steps out of the Hall that he was met by a green glare.

"What game are you playing at Zabini?! You think that I don't notice your little troops following me everywhere, same to be said for the Ravenclaws!"

Blaise weighted his options: deny everything or admit a part.

"We're trying to figure you out, Potter."

The Athar smiled grimly.

"You don't know what you're playing with Zabini, but if you want to know something, you'll have to ask me."

Zabini smirked.

"We're Slytherin, Potter. Gryffindors ask, Slytherins spy and gather information to bargain. We don't do straight approaches."



Harry shook his head.

“You’re playing with fire here, your loss. But tell your little snakes staying at Hogwarts for the summer to stay clear of the guests. I’ll have a hard time enough with them without having to take care of students too curious for their own good!”

Zabini eyed the former Gryffindor. Potter was deadly serious.

“I’ll need a better reason for that.”

“Then you’ll have to ask for it.”

The Slytherin nodded.

Since that moment, Harry went to train in the Chamber of Secrets, away from prying eyes.

The OWLs came and Hermione spent the whole day sulking. But as soon as Ron was back, she grilled him on what he had been tested on, much to Ron’s despair who wanted nothing more than forget those exams...

“Hermione!”

Ron sent a pleading look at his male friend. They were both sitting in the Infirmary next to Hermione’s bed. She would be allowed to leave the next day.

“But Ron, it can’t be that hard for you to remember, you just did it! So did the Charm written part was about animating Charms or defensive spells? Professor Flitwick hinted that it would be one of those...”

Harry smiled at the exasperated look on Ron’s face. It was during moments like this that he could believe that his friendship with Ron and Hermione was the same than a year ago.

As Ron was about to answer, the door opened and Professor McGonagall entered.

“Mr. Potter, your guests arrived.”



Smiling, Harry stood up.

"I have to go. I'll come tomorrow to help you go back to the dorms, Hermione."

The two friends nodded, not asking who the guests were.

"See you then."

"Good evening Harry. See you tomorrow," replied Hermione, followed by a 'good night' from Ron who desperately was trying to divert attention from himself.

Luck was not on his side since Hermione was back to pressing him for information about the OWLs as soon as Harry exited the room.

He followed his Head of House back to the headmaster's office, knowing who he was to meet and strengthening his mental defenses.

Fleur had answered him quickly, saying that being a quarter Veela, she wouldn't be able to help much, but that her mother was willing to help, as long as their security was guaranteed during their stay at Hogwarts.

He entered the office and was happy for his mental wards as the power of one half veela and two one-quarter veelas hit him.

Walking to the three women, escorted by a man, he guessed to be the father, and a young man in his early twenties, he saluted them, thanking them for having accepted to come.

"So, Harry, Fleur told me, that you needed our help," asked a stunning woman.

"Indeed, Madam. In two days will arrive a young half-veela. She's sixteen but never learnt to control her powers of attraction, powers I might say which are only enhanced by the other half of her heritage. She is completely controlled by her instincts. Her father, only took advantage of her, preventing her from finding her mate, blocking, focusing, enhancing her power as it suited his needs."



Mrs. Delacour had grown angrier and angrier as Harry explained Najira's case. But the part about the mate did it.

"How could he! And nobody did anything! The poor girl must be going mad!" The Half Veela was quite distraught at the girl's predicament.

Her husband took her in his arms, trying to calm his wife.

"Before leaving, I placed a block on her. From the reports I got, it was holding her powers in check. And I'd like you and your daughters to try to teach her some control. You'd have to be quite firm, Najira doesn't have the easiest personality to get along with..."

They talked a bit more, then the Delacour family was showed to their rooms, leaving Harry with Dumbledore.

"How are you holding up, Harry?" said the headmaster, his blue eyes piercing through Harry.

The young man sat on a chair.

"As good as I can, but being back here is harder than I thought... Hogwarts used to be my home and now, I can't shake this feeling that something is missing. Voldemort has been rather quiet for the week and it's worrying me. I'm worried about the arrival of our guests, about my friends, the war..."

A sigh escaped Harry's lips.

"Everything is getting so complicated..."

The aged wizard just smiled.

"In times like those we are going through, I've always thought that the best thing attitude to adopt was to do your best and then pray that it would work."

Dumbledore opened one of his drawer.



“But I also found that,” he picked a small box and opened it, “a sweet always helped to see the bright side of things... Lemon drop?” he asked, handing the box to Harry.

With a smile, the Athar reached for the box and took one sweet, popping it in his mouth.

Two days later, half of Hogwarts’ population was on the leave. The students would leave at ten in the morning and the masters arrive at noon.

Harry sighed, he wasn’t really looking forwards seeing them... Looking at his alarm clock, he saw that it was six and a half in the morning; knowing he wouldn’t get more sleep, he got up.

He put his usual black robes on, deciding to skip the training this morning. He knew he wouldn’t be able to focus anyway.

He made his way towards the Hall. He wasn’t the only riser as a few students and teachers were already eating.

His eyes fell on a blond Slytherin. The young wizard had been behaving oddly since he received a letter yesterday morning. He had been oddly silent and contemplative.

Dismissing those thoughts, Harry attacked the food on the table. If he was to deal with those people for the days to come, he needed the food. He doubted his appetite would be as good for lunch...

Ron and Hermione joined him fifteen minutes later. Most of the junior order was staying at school for the holidays, since in most cases, their families had gone into hiding.

At least all the students which were suspected of supporting the Dark Lord had left, save a dozen among the younger ones

The breakfast that silent as those who were leaving were dreading the moment they would step out of the school. No matter how secured the means of travel had been said to be, the possibility of an attack was very high. Albus Dumbledore had decided the departing students will be shipped by groups of twenty, each escorted by five



Aurors, Unspeakables or volunteers. Each groups would take different paths, and be under illusions and invisibility spells; only Dumbledore, the Minister and extremely high ranking officers were informed of the instructions given to each groups

Once breakfast was over, the students leaving went back to their packing, those staying either helping them or wandering in the school.

At ten to ten, the people escorting started to gather. They were equipped for fighting: mild spell repelling cloak, knives, vial of various potions at hand...

The departure of the children was solemn; everyone knew that some might not come back alive in September. After all, Voldemort's attacks were getting more and more random and it was now difficult to find a pattern, even his visions were not helping a lot, since they were mostly about meetings nowadays and the Dark Lord was relatively closed mouth about his plans. But there was something going on... He had been asking for rather odd things lately, keeping some of his followers close instead of sending them on missions... as if he was waiting for something or someone...

Pushing his thoughts away, Harry watched as the different groups started to leave through different means: brooms, flying cars, small portkeys made by Dumbledore, joint apparition....

Once everyone was gone, he whirled on his heels and headed for Gryffindor tower, he wasn't about to meet the masters dressed like this. All the staff and officials would go change as well, they would present a powerful front. He was human and Athar and it was time they learnt what it meant.

Two minutes to noon, Arxeren warned Harry of their imminent arrival.

Be ready, they'll be there in ten minutes, there was some delay... your horse is being a pain.... As usual."

Shadow is very nice.

A mental snort was is only answer.



Alright, he is temperamental... but Erin seemed to fare with him. What's the matter?

A mare in heat was the matter... The prince's mare, no less... your bloody stallion managed to jump over the fence and... you guess what happen...

I don't need a picture, thank you.

Anyway, they'll land on that pitch. Be ready, the masters are less than happy right now.

Their fault if they are in this mess...

Too true, just be on your guard.

I will.

Harry felt the connection with this guardian disappeared. For a moment he wondered about Rexeran. He could still feel the dragon in his mind. Their link was strong, but he was a bit worried... what if he was captured, or harmed...

Harry stood up from his bed. He had been sitting here, polishing his sword to sooth his nerves before the arrival of the newcomers. Best meet them as calm as possible, the situation would be explosive enough without adding frayed nerves to it.

He stopped in the mirror, scrutinizing his reflection, looking for a flaw. The outfit was as impressive as ever. He had let his mark visible to reaffirm his status to the masters. He might not be the Athar of their group, but he was one, and deserved some respect. His torque was resting on his chest but his medallion was hidden under the clothes, warm against his skin. His hair was pulled back and his weapons in place.

Harry tugged at his collar, blast that thing. If he ever came across the elf, Magis or Elemental who thought of this sign for single young men, he was going to make them suffer.



With a sigh, he sheathed his sword in a fluid movement. Taking his wand, he tucked it in his left sleeve and headed for the door.

The only good thing about this was that Teneb would be back.

It could even be worth having to deal with THEM...

Sighing again, something he had been doing a lot since this morning, Harry steeled himself, straightened up, closed his face and went for the door, the perfect image of power and control, his cloak billowing behind him as he headed for the pitch. On his way down there, he crossed a few students, but none of them talked to him, their greetings dieing on their lips as they took in his stance. He was given a wide berth as he walked down the corridors.

He exited the castle and a minute later was at the pitch, taking in his surroundings.

He was the only one there. The headmaster, staff and officials would wait for them in the Hall. The humans would not be seen waiting for them.

Finally, seven dragons appeared in the sky, forming a glorious picture. Only six of them were carrying a rider: Rexeran had been going around the world, having a look at the dragons in the magical reserves. Harry was quite relieved upon spotting his glowing golden form shining in the sun. While the Sowaroc, Teneb and Gae just behind dived quickly to land, the five masters chose to descend in a lazy spiral, probably to impress the spectators, should there have been some.

This made Harry smirked a bit, too bad he was the only one on the Pitch. A grin quickly then spread on his face as Teneb climbed off his Dragon and hurried towards Harry.

The two young men embraced each other in a brotherly hug, their joy to be together visible. They parted and eyed the other.

Teneb was tired, that much was obvious to Harry, his emaciated face and the bags under his eyes were speaking for themselves.



He was also dressed in his Athar's uniform and his mark on his temple was glowing as Harry knew his did.

"It's good to see you Harry," finally said the elf, clasping their forearms together, in the usual salute of Blood brothers.

The bright smile of Harry would have lit a room.

"Likewise..." He turned to Najira and Reald. "Welcome to Hogwarts" he added, nodding.

Najira was stunning as usual: her pale violet gown complimenting her gorgeous complexion, hair and eyes.

Harry immediately checked her blocks; he really didn't want every male in the school, himself included, lusting and drooling after the blond.

"When will the scholars arrive?" he asked.

Reald spoke a few words in a stone hanging at his neck, then faced calmly the young wizard.

"They will arrive shortly," he answered.

Meanwhile Rexeran had approached him.

Greeting, Astyan.

"Greetings, Rexeran," replied Harry, bowing before his dragon, before embracing the neck of the mighty reptile. The mental voice of the Dragon warmed Harry. At this moment, he realized that no matter what happened, Rexeran would remain by his side, even if their relationship would no be the one of normal riders and dragons. But when had his life been normal?

The Sowaraoc seemed to sense this as he placed his large head against Harry's chest.

I'll always stay by you, Astyan. I swore it to you before and swear it again; I am yours like you are mine.



This shook Harry's composure and puzzled him a bit. When had the dragon sworn something to him? Deciding not to ponder too much on those thoughts, he pushed them aside, only tightening his grip on the muscular neck, trying to convey all his gratefulness. He would have like to spend more time alone with Rexeran, but the problems at hand called him back to reality.

There will be always tomorrows to speak, young Astyan... said Rexeran, before walking to Gae.

Meanwhile a portal was opening in the middle of pitch, the four element combined by the craft of four elemental to create a path. It was nearly done and indeed, seconds later, horses burst through it, led by Shadow and Myst, the first galloping straight towards Harry, the later trotting more calmly to his rider.

Both mounts nuzzled their masters, distracting them a bit, making them miss the arrival of the other guests and their baggage. The masters' mounts were eating peacefully, not unnerved by the proximity of the dragons, unlike the scholars' ones which were getting more and more nervous, despite being peaceful animals. Harry observed the eight new comers as they climbed down. Four Elementals, one of each type, three men and one women, two Magis and two Elves, one female per race, were composing this group.

Deciding that the introductions would wait for them to be in the castle, Harry glanced at the masters which were still spiraling lazily above them. They didn't seem about to land anytime soon.

Sighing, Harry walked to Rexeran.

"Rexeran, could you and Gae ask if the dragons would be kind enough to land quickly, we don't have time to waste, and I don't want us to be seen... if we haven't been already."

With pleasure, they would have dived soon anyway. The Sowaroc's mental voice was tainted with amusement.

A few seconds later, the five dragon dove at break-neck speed, eliciting a few alarmed cry from their riders, while the scholars



watched as the five masters clutched to their dragons before jumping down, pale face and obviously crossed at someone or something.

However before they could start to rant, Teneb had stepped forwards.

“Since we’re now all here, we can head to the castle, the humans are waiting for us, or so was I told. Accommodations had been made for our mounts.”

By the sullen faces of most of the guests, the prospect of doing so was less than thrilling to them. Nonetheless, they walked their horse to the stables, leaving them there in the care of two Fighters of the VWF who had worked with horses before and knew how to handle them. Despite this, Harry, placed Shadow in the paddock himself, not wanting his stallion to hurt the two men.

As they reached the doors of the castle, they opened magically before them, something which made Harry smile discreetly. Professor Dumbledore, sure had a flair for dramatics.

They passed the entrance and stepped in the Great Hall.

The sight that met them was impressive: the house elves had cleaned it thoroughly and decorated it with the colors and emblems of the four houses.

The students were wearing their uniform, but Harry could see that the black robes had been subjected to house-elf magic: not one outfit was stained, patched and all were perfectly fitted.

As they entered, the students rose to their feet at the same time. Ignoring the stares and the crowd gathered in the room, Teneb walked down to the Head table, expanded for the occasion. The young elf was regal in his demeanor, his features sporting an aristocratic air to them. Following the Athar were Reald, escorting Najira. Gasps erupted as the part-Veela glided behind Teneb. The scholars and masters marched in their suite, and Harry drew the end, keeping an eye on his former teachers.

For once, the entire Hall was completely silent as they watched the strangers approach the staff’s table. As the surprise on the face



around him was not too great, Harry guessed that the headmaster must have briefed them before they arrived.

All the members of the Junior Order were eyeing the newcomers suspiciously, in particular Hermione, Ron and Blaise who all knew about the status of the relations between the races.

Teneb stopped at the Head table and bowed his head slightly to the Headmaster who returned the gesture, somewhat stiffly.

“We thank you for hosting us in those dire times and hope to provide the help needed in this fight.” His stance was proud, his words carefully chosen. His training had been successful, molding him in a young man who would be able to hold his own in the elven court.

“Know that we gladly accept your offer and help and thank you for your assistance in our time of need,” the voice of Amos Diggory was devoid of emotion. Teneb nodded at him. The words had been less than truthful, both of them knew it, but appearance had to be preserved.

Harry took this as his cue and walked to Najira. Nodding his head at her, he did not miss the surprised looks this gesture drew to him, as well as the jealousy and envy shining in the eyes of most males in the room. Ignoring it, he offered the young woman his arm and led her to the Delacour family who eyed her with interest and for the female part, some compassion and pity. As they walked, Harry was trying to suppress his urge to step away from the girl, shake her arm off his. He knew she was not completely to blame for what happened, but it would take time before he could act more naturally around her. He was walking stiffly, his face stony, not sparing a glance at the beauty at his side.

Without a word, he bowed to Fleur and Gabrielle’s mother and placed Najira’s hand in hers. He turned his eyes to the young princess and his gaze held enough warning for her to understand the message. She nodded and leaned on Harry.

“Nothing will be enough to make you forgive my actions, but now I deeply regret them.”



Harry tensed, she was too close, far too close for him and his mind was screaming for him to get more distance between them.

"I need time," he whispered. She nodded in agreement to his decision again and stepped back. She curtsied deeply before the young wizard, who nodded his agreement, and a second time to Mrs. Delacour.

The older half-Veela just sat her at her side and started to spoke quietly with the young half-elf. Silently, a tired look in his eye, Harry walked away, bowed respectfully to the Headmaster to show the respect he held for the old man before joining Hermione and Ron at the Gryffindor's table as the introductions started.

Dumbledore rose to his feet, and Harry couldn't help but be awed by the elderly man. The headmaster looked every inch the powerful wizard he was rumored to be. He was dressed in light blue and steel grey robes, but the cut was different from the usual type of robes. Looking closer, Harry noticed most of the staff wore the same kind of outfit? He would later learn that this reflected their status of masters or adept in their craft. They were harboring the colors of their families as well as their emblems: their blazons were embroidered on their right breast, surrendered by silver rings, the number of them symbolizing their level of mastery. A golden ring meant an adept level.

The headmaster folded his hands, which were covered by long sleeves. The robes were high-collared and reached the ankles; small silver buttons closed the upper part. With every movement, the material shone in the light. His beard had been trimmed and instead of his usual humorous hat, a single platinum band circled his head and a silver chain rested on his chest, showing him to be the Head of his family. He first introduced the Minister and various official who would have to deal with the newcomers, then the professors.

"Allow me to present my staff, most of them masters: Professor McGonagall, Deputy Headmistress, Mistress of Transfiguration, Animagi, head of Gryffindor, Bronze scroll of Morgana award, Animated Dueling champion."

The woman was sitting next to him, the broach pinned to her shoulder making her one of the elder of her family.



“Professor Flitwick, Charm Adept, Head of Ravenclaw, three time dueling champion, Curse-breaking expert, member of the Charms’ Union of Researchers, Sorcerers and Enchanters.”

The small man bowed his head as Albus Dumbledore introduced the next member of his staff.

“Professor Snape, Potion Adept, Poisons’ Expert, Inner member of the Potion masters’ Guild, Golden cauldron award for his work on Wolfbane and Medea medal first class for his work on undetectable poisons, Head of Slytherin and Dueling champion.”

Harry was impressed. He had not expected his feared Potion teacher to hold such titles.... The man was wearing a sullen and scornful expression on his face, as he glanced at the people before him. He had his hair tied back and was dressed in Black robes with a crimson lining. A flash of light attracted Harry’s eyes to his hands where he spotted a signet ring.

As if sensing he was being observed, Snape looked towards the Gryffindors and raised an eyebrow at his pupil’s scrutiny. A sardonic smile spread on his lips, followed immediately by a full-force glare.

Meanwhile, Dumbledore carried on introducing all the professors, and Harry realized why those three schools were considered as elite schools. Nearly all the professors were experts and held quite a few titles. Dumbledore finally came to an end after announcing his own titles.

Teneb then started his own introduction and that was then that the young wizard reported his attention on the riders. One or two scholars seemed curious, but most of them were either frowning or down right sulking.

The elf took a deep breath and started his speech.

“On my right is standing Reald Eldir Ikerstorm, uncle of the crowned Prince of the Elves, Scholar specialized in the study of ancient languages and prophecies.” The older elf inclined his head. “Sitting at the table, Najira Tyra Hoersen, half sister of the Prince and half



Veela,” Teneb continued, Najira smiling charmingly at those watching him, aware of the effect she had on them.

Apparently not in the least phased by Najira’s action, the Athar carried on his introduction, pointing to each people as he gave their name. He quickly presented the five masters, not leaving them time to answer, since whatever they might say, it wouldn’t have been nice, giving their disgusted expressions. He started then to introduce the scholars, but Harry paid little attention to them, watching attentively his former masters. He didn’t want them to cause a scene before the whole school. Ron and Hermione noticed his behavior and spread words for caution

Finally, Teneb reached to the end of his speech.

“I am Teneb Ildar Oreansky, future High Counsellor of the Prince and Athar among the riders, sharing the duties of the charge with Athar Harry.” With a smile, he mock-bowed at his friend, a gesture the wizard returned, deaf to the gasps erupting in the Hall as people outsiders to the Order of the Staff put two and two together, after hearing those words and before the obvious similitude between the elf and the wizard.

Harry’s smile vanished however as Effilin, his patience wearing thin, exploded.

“Teneb! Will you stop this farce!”

He would have said more, but as he opened his mouth, no sounds came out of it. Looking around, trying to find the culprit responsible for his predicament, his mouth was opening and closing while his face was reddening violently, with a few veins appearing.

A few others among those sitting at the Head table turned inconspicuously towards Harry, but were only met with a blank stare, only betrayed by an amused glint in his green eyes.

Deciding to prevent the situation from degenerating, Dumbledore rose on his feet.



"I think that you must wish to rest and refresh yourself after your travel. Rooms have been readied for your stay and Harry will guide you through the castle. Lunch will be brought to your room. Meanwhile I won't prevent the students from enjoying their meal!"

With a clap of his hands, the tables were filled with food. Harry repressed a smile as a few of the scholars jumped, startled by this sudden appearance.

Silently, the young man led them out of the Hall. As the door closed behind them, he could hear the growing sounds of the whispering now going on in the Hall. Only Najira had stayed behind, but Harry knew that the Delacours would take care of her from now on.

Once in the deserted corridors, Harry lengthened his strides, forcing the others to accelerate unless they wanted to get lost.

*You silenced him, didn't you?* Teneb's mental voice was clearly amused.

*Of course I did, before he made a fool of himself or said something I don't want to be known for now.*

*I don't know this charm.*

*I'll teach it to you, it can come quite in handy. I was taught it here.*

Then Harry remembered what he had learned about the enchantment cast millennia ago by wizards.

*I'll need to talk to you, as soon as possible,* said Teneb suddenly as Harry was about to say the same thing.

*Me too*

*Tomorrow morning?*

*Same hour, on the pitch.*

Teneb nodded slightly, then added in a mirthful tone.



*By the way, I'll have to show you what happened at the Headquarters, Demenor nearly went crazy.*

Harry had then a really hard preventing himself from bursting in laughter.

They finally reached the wing reserved to the guests and stopped in front of the portrait of a sleeping Merlin. Turning towards the others, he explained.

“You were located here for the duration of your stay. The current password is Unity. It will be changed every week and you’ll be warned of the change by a member of the staff.”

Speaking the password, he watched as the portrait slide aside, revealing the entrance to the new quarters. The baggage had been brought already as Harry immediately noticed.

With a sigh, he warded the room, before lifting the hex on Effilin.

Immediately, the Fighting Master launched into a heated rant. Shaking his fist in the air, spittle flying from his mouth, he reminded Harry of his uncle in a strange way....

“How dare you! You little worthless piece of human scum! This place reeks of your kind of filth! I may be forced to stay among cowards and weaklings, but I won’t be submitted to such a humiliation!”

Harry tuned him out, having heard the same thing already, while Teneb stood on the sides, watching, having decided to let his blood brother handle the irate Master.

After a while, Effilin was forced to pause for a few seconds to catch his breath, a pause of which Harry took advantage.

With a bored expression, he looked at the man.

“You know what? I. Don’t. Care about what you think about me. The Headmaster agreed to host you for the duration of your stay in his school. You can go wherever you want, as long as you stay on the grounds. What you’ll do then is your problem.”



Most of the elementals, magis and elves were now frowning.

"Watch your tongue, human!" snapped Edevia, "And address us with the respect you owe us!"

Harry's eyes hardened.

"I'll do so when you'll treat me with the respect my title ask for, and when you'll use my name; until then, I'll behave as you will."

Sarwin restrained the enraged Fighting master who had lunged towards the Athar, and sneered at him.

"Never," he spat, "humans deserve no respect. A race of cowards, of lying thieves, that's all you are!"

Harry felt his anger spike and his fire powers steer inside him, but he wouldn't give him the pleasure to know he had struck a nerve.

He returned the sneer.

"Let's get this settled: you don't like me, I don't like you. The feeling is mutual, but there are appearances to be saved. In case you haven't understand this, there is a war going on in my world!"

He paused, choosing his words.

"You are bringing danger to this school by your mere presence. This place is one of the last strongholds of the resistance in this country and nobody needs the moral to be dampened any more than it already is."

He let his words sink, really wanting to hammer this in their head.

It was not that he feared for their health or their sake, but he knew it would only bring more problems, should a fight broke out between the humans and the other races, problems they really didn't need. During the week, he had walked around a bit, talked to a few people..... Everyone's nerves were strained and the slightest provocation would set most people off.



“Do whatever you want, as long as you’re not a bother. If you so desire, your meals can be brought to this room, just ring with this bell and it will appear on the table. Just notify it to a staff member.”

The young Athar turned towards the scholars.

“Once you’ll be finished with your meal, people will come to show you what they have already found, as well as give you a tour of the Library.”

Harry paused, trying to guess if he had forgotten anything.

Meanwhile, Teneb had been exploring the wing. They were currently staying in the main room. Three doors led out of it : two opened on corridors, leading to small suites: a bedroom, bathroom and an office in each of them. The third one opened on a small kitchen. Apparently they had separated the men from the women, given the number of suites in each corridor. It was then a relief for Teneb that no couple had been chosen...

Suddenly, Teneb frowned slightly as he counted the number of rooms readied. Only fourteen had been done... and they were fifteen, Reald and himself included.

He was finishing his explorations when Harry reached the end of his explanations as several people entered the room, including the headmaster and Harry’s two friends. Both of them looked rather uneasy, but stayed nonetheless.

For a moment, nobody spoke, each side eyeing the other, Finally Dumbledore broke the silence.

“Harry, if you will?”

Nodding respectfully, he faced his old friends.

Hermione was scrutinizing the strangers, assessing them; Ron however seemed focused on him and curiously, Teneb. A glint of something was shining in his eyes, but whatever it was, Harry couldn’t place it. Mentally shrugging, the raven-haired young man approached his blood brother.



“Another set of rooms was readied for you if you wish to see them.”

The elf smiled, the mystery of the lacking suite solved, then nodded his assent. They made their way to the door, stopped by Edevia as they were about to leave.

“Why does, young Teneb have his own rooms when we have to share?”

The Archery’s mistress seemed peeved at what she viewed as a clear injustice.

“This wing is isolated from the rest of the school,” explained Harry, “But if you prefer to live among humans, it can be arranged easily...”

The grimace marring the elf’s face was answer enough.

“If there’s nothing else, we’ll leave you to your meal,” said Dumbledore, clapping his hands.

The people present exited the room, Harry talking animatedly with Teneb and missing the slight frown on Ron’s face as he followed the two Athars, Hermione at his side.

Dumbledore was the only one left behind and as he was about to pass the door, he turned to face the guests of the school, his features stony.

“Understand this. Voldemort is the only reason you were allowed in this school. I do not wish for contacts between our people than you do. My family witnessed enough of where such alliance led to.”

The elderly man was transformed. Gone was his usual twinkle and cheerful face, leaving a hard and bitter expression.

“Heed my warning as it will be your only one. You will be treated as you will treat us, nothing more, nothing less.”

Two scholars, a Magis and an Elf, pierced him with their eyes.



“You’re one of their descendants,” said the older one, more like a statement than a question.

A nod was their only answer as the Headmaster exited their quarters.

The Masters had arrived.

Ginny and Colin were among the last to arrive. Silently, they took their seats. They were seven to be already here, themselves included, and were waiting for the last one to arrive, a 5th year Hufflepuff, Sandy Daniels.

In reality, they were quite a lot, two people, a girl and a boy per year in every house, but during the regulars meetings, like this one, only the agents in the same year were gathered.

Their two instructors were missing, so Ginny indulged herself in a little day-dreaming.

This had really been a one time opportunity! Too bad, she couldn’t tell anybody about it. She would have loved to rub Tamera’s nose in it! Here she was, Ginevra Weasley, active agent of the Information Department of the Unspeakables!

It had been a real stroke of luck, that she had been selected by the scouts. They had been recruiting, they had told her. The man who had been her contact had given her all the crediting needed to back his story, nobody could be careful enough nowadays.

The meetings took place every three days. They were asked to keep an eye on their fellow students, to keep a feel of the school’s moral, to stay informed of the various rumors going on and verify the truth in them as well as find their source. Sometimes, they would have to look for something, shadow someone or get some data on one’s habit.

They had even met Valyan once to be reassured about the reality of the Agency.

Since then, the only people they had seen were their two trainers. They knew some of the other members, those they could remember



from the first meeting where they all gathered, but besides that, they knew nothing of what they were doing...

She was proud to be helping in the war. True she was part of the Junior Order, but Ron, being one of the leaders, always prevented her from taking any kind of risk or doing important work.

She knew her brother only wanted to protect her but, now was not the time. She had the skills, she knew it, Colin did too and like many in the group was overlooked most of the time by his peers.

She would prove her worth! This was her chance to show the world that Ginevra Weasley was no longer a helpless little girl!

As Draco Malfoy was driven to his manor in his father's limo, he read his letter once more.

It had come the day before and since then he had hardly been able to rest.

He reread it once more, even if he now knew its words by heart by now, having looked at it countless times as the worn state of the parchment showed.

*My son*

*I write to you about your upcoming return.*

*Know that an honor was bestowed upon our family. Among all the sons and daughters of our Lord's servants, you were chosen, along with eleven others to be part of his Elite. You will be personally trained by our Lord and be honored to receive his teachings. You will be part of his best, of those he will trust above any others!*

*I trust you will recognize this as the honor it is and that you'll behave accordingly. I would be most displeased should something prevent you from carrying the Malfoy name to new heights.*

*You will be brought before Him upon your arrival at the manor. Be sure to be dressed as fitting for the Malfoy heir.*



*I do not know what our Lord has planned for his Chosen; but I know you will be tested as you'll kneel before him. Be sure to act as expected of you. Failure to do so would have extremely unpleasant consequences, should you survive. Do not provoke our Lord's wrath or mine.*

The letter was not signed, but the script was unmistakably of Lucious Malfoy's hand. The Malfoy's seal was another proof of the authenticity of the letter.

As if it hadn't been enough, the letter had been coded and any people reading it without knowing the key would have only found a letter asking about his health, his exams and the coming holidays.

He crumpled the letter in his hand, his knuckles whitening as he tightened his fists.

He recalled his last encounter with Potter, the memory only serving in angering him more.

Who did he think he was with his pretty speeches about how we all had the choice! He didn't know anything! Did you really have a choice when the only alternative was Death?

No, Draco didn't think so. He wanted to live and not answering this summon would mean only one thing for him, no matter what Wonder Boy said. If he didn't obeyed he would die, as simple as that, be it by Voldemort's hand or his father's

He relaxed his grip on the letter, smoothing the paper with a handy little charm.

With the war going on, students were now allowed to use magic out of school, something he had come to really appreciate, even if he had already been able to do it in several rooms of the manor who were warded against the Ministry' control.

A small ringing sound warned him that they would arrive in two minutes.



Taking a deep breath, he steeled his features. No use letting his father see his distress. He was a Malfoy and would act like one.

That's it!

Well, things are starting to get interesting. Thanks again for your reviews! I'll try to be quicker with the next chapter, sorry again!

Naia



## **Chapter Twenty-Four**

Two days later, Harry was regretting having ever agreed to the Masters' presence in the castle. They had taken to roam the corridors, criticizing everything they saw.

Nothing found grace in their eyes: from the architecture of the school, deemed massive and graceless, well representing the inferior human race, the students, qualified of ignorants, noisy whelps, the teachers, judged as failures and fakes, to the ghosts, who they called abominations.

For the moment, Harry was striding down towards the dungeons.

This morning, they had decided to sit on one of the Potion classes held during the summer, despite Snape's none too subtle way to tell them they were not welcome in his territory. Thirty minutes later, a student was seen running to Gryffondor's tower for Harry Potter.

Harry arrived minutes later to find the former Potions' room in a state of disarray that not even Neville's mishaps or the Weasley twins' antics had managed to reach.

Cauldrons were blownd against the walls, on which various potions' ingredients had been splattered. Harry recognized some newt eyes, frog guts, salamender's skin, and other plants, now adorning the stones.

Two tables were scorched down to a pile of ashes, and four others had suffered the consequences of a heavy explosion. A sickly orange goo was spread on the floor, and most of the room.

As he surveyed the damages, Harry took out his wand, casting various cleaning charms to try to get rid of part of this mess.

The students, Hermione among them, something which made Harry realized it had been a session of the Potion group, had been protected by a kind of barrier, no doubt thrown by the former Death-Eaters who was tending to them, sending murderous glances towards the 'guests' which promised a slow and painful agony.



They were standing on the opposite sides, looking a bit shocked to say the least.

Harry rubbed his temples.

“POTTER!” Severus Snape strode towards him. “Be it noted, that I, acting as a member of the teaching staff and Head of house, bar those menaces,” he pointed towards the Masters, “access to the laboratory or any rooms used to practice or learn the art of Potions until I say otherwise.”

Harry felt a shift in the wards around the room as he nodded his acknowledgement of Snape’s decision.

Heads of house had the power to prevent people accessing some rooms if they deemed those persons presented a danger. Such a decision had to be well-founded and witnessed. Professors rarely had to use this right, but from time to time, events would lead one of them to call for this measure.

Harry sighed, his head throbbing with vengeance. Fates had to really hate him right now. An enraged Snape was not a pretty thing that early in the morning.

“What did they do, Professor?”

The blazing eyes turned to him, making him feel eleven again.

“Those dimwits thought themselves above me and thought that adding dragon’s blood to the Kyrian Draught, just after gryffin’s blood, without stirring, cooling the potion or adding a tampering solution would strengthen it! Not only did they wasted precious ingredients, but they nearly blown us all!”

Harry winced. Even if he wasn’t the greatest Potion students, he knew the basics. Arxeren had drilled them in his head for the past year.

Adding blood from a cold-blooded creature, just after some from a warm-blooded one, in particular when the both creatures were magical led to an intense chain-reaction, which if not controlled



through a careful stirring or some other means would lead to a violent physical and magical explosion.

Seeing the livid state of the Potion Professor, Harry thought it better to take the masters away, before they found important pieces of their anatomy missing.

He turned towards them.

“Out.”

Sneering, they obeyed nonetheless, not before dishing a few scornful comments, targeting Snape’s competences. Harry shuddered as he watched the glint shining in his former professor’s eyes.

He knew the spy would exact revenge for these insults and seeing the faces of the Slytherins, he knew his house would give full support to their Head, no matter which side they were in this war.

Harry shrugged. He wouldn’t intervene. The Masters had brought this on their heads; they would reap what they sow. He would sit quietly back and enjoy the show.

“Potter!”

Harry turned towards his Professor.

“If one of them ever step in this room again without my consent, you’ll wish the Dark Lord had killed you when you were a baby.”

Knowing better than answering, Harry nodded and left, hearing Snape bark orders to the students in the room.

Resolutely, he started to track the castle’s guests, finding them outside, watching from afar as Hagrid taught third year students about Runespoor.

Harry steeled himself as he closed the space between them. Nerthor turned and Harry was a bit surprised to see deep bags under his eyes.

He frowned slightly at this.



“It’s you...”

Harry let the scorn slide on him; it had been months since he had let it get to him.

“You must be proud to be the first people to be banned from the Potions’ rooms for a century.”

Sarwin turned towards him.

“This Snape is an ignoramus! Everyone now that Dragon’s blood is a key ingredient for all potions or draught of the fifth level and above. This Kyrian Draught is of tenth level and used to restore magical level!”

“And every first year students knows that mixing blood from cold and warm-blooded animals is one of the biggest mistakes to make.”

Sarwin reddened.

“But dragon’s blood is neutral; it can’t lead to a negative reaction!”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“In case you hadn’t noticed, you’re in the human world. The Dragon’s species present in this world, though magical, don’t reach the magical level of those in your world. Their blood is a powerful but volatile ingredient to be handled with care.”

Sarwin paled a bit at that and Harry continued.

“Your people know next to nothing of what can be done through potions. Your skills with magic make you discard other fields of the magical arts: potions, artefacts...”

Effilin’s head snapped towards him.

“Keep your thoughts to yourself. We’re stronger than your people could ever dream to be! We don’t need things like potions or tools... they’re the means of weaklings!”



Harry rolled his eyes, was there any point in talking to them... they were far too blinded to even try to see beyond their preconceptions.

“Very well, in that case, I will leave you to your devices, don’t call for me anymore.”

He stalked back to the castle.

During the weeks that followed, he remained true to his word. He didn’t do anything when a thestral nearly mauled Lienhor, when Edevia fell in a Devil Snare or when Sarwin dared to challenge Dumbledore to duel, now, this had been an enjoyable sight.

He was however surprised to find Nerthor waiting for him outside the Gryffondor’s common room one morning when he came back from his training.

“Master Nerthor,” he said, neutrally.

“Athar,” replied Nerthor.

This unsettled Harry. Never had one of the masters acknowledged his rank among the rider’s hierarchy. He frowned.

There was a silence as both of them eyed the other, trying to guess his thoughts.

“Why are you here?” finally asked Harry. He didn’t want to miss breakfast and he still had to take a shower and get ready. Nerthor looked even worse than the days before. His face was pale and emaciated with large bags under his eyes. His hands were trembling slightly and he seemed completely exhausted.

The Master seemed to be fighting an internal battle.

On one hand, his pride seemed to be reeling at the idea of lowering himself to ask Harry for something, but on the other hand, he seemed to need an answer.

Finally his need won, since he started to speak.



“What do you know about the building of this school?”

Harry blinked. Whatever he had been waiting for, an history lesson had definitively not been high on his list of probabilities.

“Could you be more specific?”

Nerthor’s lips thinned and a rosy tint spread on his cheek.

“Is there any wards which were placed on this school concerning mental abilities?”

Harry’s brow furrowed. Where was he going? He hadn’t had any problems with his own abilities, neither had Teneb.

“Nothing that I’m aware of.”

“Really, are you sure, or is your memory too short to remember something about it?”

Harry felt a surge of annoyance at this.

“Why are you asking me this? I don’t have time right now!”

Nerthor seemed to bit back a retort and took a deep breath.

“Because, you stupid human, none of my shields are holding! Since we arrived, they haven’t stopped crashing down! I’m always overwhelmed by the ininteressant, idiotic thoughts of the inhabitants of this castle! Days and nights!”

The Air Elemental seemed about to have a break down. So it must be true... but then why he or Teneb or any of the others had not been affected.

Well, the scholars and the other masters had only their natural empathy and telepathy, so their natural, instinctive shields were enough to protect them, those couldn’t be brought down. The masters, even if they had been trained in this field while they were Daryns, had not used those abilities afterwards, thus losing the sensibilities one could develop after a long daily use of them. But in Nerthor’s,



Teneb's and his own case, they had been trained in the mental arts and were using those skills; so why had he been the only one affected?

"Is it the only thing happening?"

Nerthor bit his lips, hesitating.

"Well? Is it?" Harry was getting impatient. He took a look at his watch, only fifteen minutes left!

The Mind master grimaced.

"There this feeling of being probed each times my shields fell... I raise them immediately up, but it's still there... And I feel like I'm always being watched..."

Harry stared at him.

"I'm not going mad!" he shouted, mistaking the Athar's expression which morphed to a cold detached look.

"I was not thinking anything of the sort. As to your predicament, you only brought it upon yourself... I'm tempted to let you deal with it."

Nerthor shot him an angry look, opening his mouth to protest, but Harry cut him.

"But that would lower me to your level."

The young wizard paused.

"This school was founded centuries ago. Generations and generations of wizards and witches succeeded to each other in these walls. Magic was performed daily, magical wars took place on its grounds. All that magic penetrated every stones of the school, accumulating in its walls, saturating it."

"In a way, you can say that Hogwarts is nearly sentient... Not in the literal sense, it's not a living, thinking entity. But it's so attuned to magic that it can sense things, to simplify it."



The older rider frowned.

“What is this non-sense?”

Harry dismissed his words.

“Believe me or not, that’s not my problem. This probing you felt must be the school wards trying to read you, so to speak. The others don’t have their shields up all the times, so they didn’t feel it. Being more sensitive to mind touches, you couldn’t miss it...”

Nerthor sneered.

“So, what can I do to stop this bunch of bricks to stop messing with MY mind?”

“Don’t fight the probe. Once Hogwarts will have found you mean no harm to the school, it will stop. But as long as you’ll be thinking ill of the people living here, the wards won’t stop watching you. They felt your animosity, probably from your aura, so they deemed you a potential threat to the safety of the school.”

Nerthor’s sneer amplified.

“Rubbish! A pack of fairytales!”

He whirled on his heels and stormed away. Shaking his head, Harry spoke the passwords and hurried towards the bathroom.

They would never learn.

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While the Masters were having a hard time integrating themselves in the school’s routine, the scholars had had less problems.

Having clearly defined aims, they spent their days locked in the library, looking over old, rotting manuscripts, others that were to be handled with the most delicate hands since they tended to fell to dust at the smallest wrong move. Even charms couldn’t really help it.



The scholars were working along with the research teams that had already been researching the ritual. They had brought a few archives with them, but didn't share them.

They managed to cooperate well enough with the human teams by keeping their interaction to a minimum and were strictly professional. As soon as they were done with their day's work, they left to their rooms and stayed there for the evening and night, only coming out to head towards the Library once more.

He had heard no complaints about them since they had arrived, something for which he was grateful, he had enough to do with the Masters.

That's why he was quite surprised to see the four Elementals part of the group walk to him.

He frowned a bit, something he had done quite a lot lately. He was sure he'll get premature wrinkles if this kept up like this.

The four scholars stopped within a safe distance from him, something which made him raise his brows. Was he that scary?

"Athar," said the older one, Helion, a Water Elemental.

Harry bowed his head slightly.

"My colleagues and myself would like to talk with you, in private preferably."

Harry's frown deepened. He was definitively entering the twilight zone here... He nodded nonetheless, curious, then guided them towards the room of requirement.

He didn't know a room in this castle that was completely warded from any spying device or devoid of paintings.... But the Room of requirement would provide it for him.

Passing in front of the entrance, he then opened the door, motioning to the four others to follow him.



The room was bare: a large table and five chairs, naked walls, nothing more.

Wordlessly, Harry sat and waited for them to speak.

They looked uneasily around them, before whispering slightly.

Harry started to drum his fingers on the wooden surface of the table, getting impatient.

Either the drumming got on their nerves or they finally decided to say whatever they had to, but Helion spoke up.

"I know your race is not known for your thinking abilities, Athar, but I think that such behaviour is not only careless and foolish but also dangerous."

The temperature in the room seemed to drop. Harry's eyes grew cold.

"It would help, Helion of the Elementals, if I knew what you are talking about?" The threat was audible in his voice.

The Elementals seemed stunned at this answer.

"You.... You don't know..." This time, it had been the female Fire Elemental who had spoken. "You really don't?"

Harry growled.

"Could you get to the point?" There was no mistaking the flame wavering in the back of his eyes....

Helion eyed him.

"No, you don't know. That much is true." He took a deep breath. "It's hard for us to say this, Athar. Thorough the past weeks, we suffered from unexpected burst of Elemental power. We investigated a little and to our horror," his voice got louder, "we noticed that we had been living around completely untrained Elemental gifted!"

Harry showed no visible surprise, even if this came to him as a shock. Helion didn't stop.



“How can your elders and teachers be thoughtless enough to gather youngsters of opposed elements without giving them the slightest training or grasp over their abilities? But then, adults are also part of those gifted... The raw energies are merging, clashing with the others, all the time! Some managed to tune them off, somehow, others repressed them by sheer willpower.”

He would have carried on, but Harry raised his hand, asking for his silence.

“And, pray tell, what should we have done?”

His tone was calm, reasonable, something which didn't fare well for the future.

The Air-Elemental nearly shot out of his chair.

“What are you saying?! Your people should have noticed their gift and trained them from that moment!”

“And how,” Harry cut the man, “would we have done this?” Harry was seething.

The Elemental threw his hands in the air.

“By any means you wanted! Through schooling, apprenticeship, tutoring! You can't be that stupid to leave people like them going around like this!”

Harry stood up, his hands slamming on the table, echoing on the bare stone walls.

“And, tell me, Elemental, who would have trained them?” he asked in a whisper. He continued: “There haven't been human Elemental masters or mistresses for millennia and no records of their skills, so, tell me, how?”

Silence met his question.

Sneering, he shook his head, and stormed out of the room, not bothering to listen to the four scholars who stared at his departing



back, before starting to speak between themselves in hushed and indignant tones for some of them.

Meanwhile, Harry was trying to calm himself and decided that a trip to the kitchen would be the best way. Dobby always managed to cheer him up.

He tickled the pear and stepped in the passageway. He finally entered the kitchen and took a few steps back.

The room had been expanded to five times its former size, and there were at least three or four times more house-elves busying themselves around.

Eyes bulging, Harry took another step back, to allow a flock of those little creatures to pass by him, large plates in their arms.

Some were stirring cauldrons, other chopping various kind of meats or peeling vegetables and potatoes. Others were arranging fruits, baking cakes...

The Kitchen was bustling with noise.

“HARRY POTTER!”

Suddenly, Harry was nearly bowled over by a hysterical house-elf.

“Harry Potter, Sir! Dobby knew you weren’t dead, sir! Dobby knew! And Harry Potter came to see Dobby! Dobby is so honoured!” Dobby was speaking in an interrupted stream of word, interrupted by squeaks.

Once he managed to string all these words together to form sentences, Harry smiled at his small friend, even if said friend had tried to kill him, or at least seriously maim him in the past.

“Hello Dobby, I missed you...”

The little being burst into tears at this, muttering about how great Harry Potter was.



Patting his head awkwardly, Harry tried to relinquish his grips on his leg, if only to allow his blood to circulate.

“There, there, Dobby, how come there’re so many of house-elves?”

Dobby pulled away.

“House-elves from Beauxbatons and families came to help at Hogwarts, Harry Potter, sir. There’re a lot of people to feed and new rooms to clean, now. House-elves are taking care of food and the castle... But it’s getting difficult to get fresh food for everyone... House-elves have to travel a lot.... But we are doing our jobs well, sir.”

Harry nodded.

He had never wondered where the food came from, apparently it didn’t appear on his plate by magic... well it did in a way, but not really....

“I’m sure you all do your job well Dobby. Now, could I have an apple?”

The little creature nodded enthusiastically and seconds later, Harry found himself holding a plate filled with apples.

Thanking the house-elves, Harry went back to his room, intending to relax for an hour before reading the reports Albus had gave him yesterday, after the Order’s meeting. On his way, he passed before the Delacour’s doors. The family was currently out at the moment, having deemed it necessary to bring Najira to a Veela community, her problems being too much for them to deal with alone. The part-Veela’s attitude had done nothing to help.

He remembered the last fight which had taken place between the bastard princess and the Delacours, Fleur in particular. The whole thing had happened a week ago...

**Flashback**



It had been a two weeks since Najira's arrival. The young princess had behaved quite well for the first one, but then things had started to go downhill.

At first it had been small things: her clothes were too simple, she was used to be assisted a lot and was finding it difficult to cater to her own needs.

She had also managed to alienate Fleur.

She and the two Delacours' girls had got on quite well. But then Najira had decided to make Gabrielle her maid. At first the younger girl had complied to her demands since they had been reasonable: fetch some food, a book, help her do her hair. It had helped that Gabrielle was in awe of Najira.

Harry could see why. Even though Gabrielle was older now, she was still a bit childish and had been extremely protected by her sister and her parents. To her eyes, Najira was a real princess, and so some of her excesses could be excused.

However when Najira had ordered her to clean her rooms and to help her get dressed, it had been the last straw for Gabrielle who had grown a bit weary of the blonde's demands. She refused, angering the part-elf.

After some shouting, promises, threats, Gabrielle still wouldn't comply. Angered at this, Najira slapped her, as she would have done at Horevald.

The problem was that Fleur happened to enter the room then, wanting to know what the shouting was about.

Seeing her sister get struck made her snap. Not waiting for an explanation, she stalked towards Najira and slapped her as hard as possible, telling Gabrielle to leave the room.

She then started to invectivate Najira. Drawing a crowd at the door she had let open slightly.

That was how Harry noticed something was wrong.



Students from upper years were gathered before Najira's door, some cheering, some betting, others commenting or just watching what was happening.

Eyebrows raised, Harry had made his way to the door and stopped in the entranceway, shocked.

Fleur and Najira had moved from insults to curse and nails. Their hair was in disarray, their clothes a bit ripped, a few scratches and bruises on their arms and faces.

Harry slammed the door behind him, ignoring the groans from the students at the loss of the fight.

Despite this, none of them were alerted of his arrival.

Finally, deciding to step in before the things got too bad, he cast petrifying charms at them, thus ending the confrontation.

The two young women turned to him.

"What do you think your doing?" he yelled.

They started to speak at the same time, their voice hoarse, pointing at each other.

"Silence!"

They quietened.

"Fleur, what happened?"

"She hit Gabrielle! I saw her slap my sister!"

Harry narrowed his eyes and shot a dark look at Najira who had the grace to look down.

"And then?"

"I slapped her and it started from there."



Fleur was outraged. Harry could understand why... but her veela side was making her over react too. He raised his eyes to the sky, sighing.

"Fleur, please, could you go see if Gabrielle is alright. I'll deal with this."

The French girl nodded and left the room.

"Athar..."

Harry whirled on his heels.

"Najira," his voice was cold, as were his eyes, boring into her.

"It was Gabrielle's fault! She refused to clean my room and do my hair!"

The temperature in the room dropped.

"Is that why you slapped her?"

Najira nodded, starting to get uncomfortable.

"Then I wonder if you're worth our efforts."

At these words, Najira's face paled, her eyes watering.

"Athar... but she..."

"She has no obligations towards you! You should have been thankful: the Delacours welcomed you, their daughters did everything to help you settle in, and what did you do? You hit Gabrielle the moment she refused, with good reason, to comply to one of your orders!"

"But..."

"There's no but, Najira! You're not a princess here, you're a guest! So stop acting like everyone owe you something! You'll apologize to Gabrielle and Fleur today, I'll be sure to check you do."

"What about Fleur? She hit me!"



“She defended her sister, I see no problems with this.”

Harry looked down at her. Even in this state she still had a certain allure... It made him wanting to...

Realizing what was happening, Harry strengthened his shields. He knew the Delacours had lessened the blocks on the part-elf since she seemed to fare well under their tutoring.

He glared at her with an intensity which would have been up to par with Snape's best performance.

“Never, ever try this again, I thought you knew better!”

Najira looked distraught at this.

“Athar,... wait, I'm so-sorry, I didn't want to.... I'm sorry....”

She fell to his feet, the picture of desolation.

Harry roughly pulled her to her feet.

“Stop that, you don't really mean it, Najira, you and I both know it. So when you'll really want to apologize, I'll accept it. Meanwhile you'll still have to make amends for your behavior towards Fleur and Gabrielle.”

With that, he left her, hearing the door slam behind him but not bothered by it. He didn't see Najira trash her whole room, shattering everything she laid her hands upon, throwing it at the walls, on the grounds, before slumping in the middle of the rooms, among pieces of glass, sobbing until exhaustion took over her and she fell asleep.

She had apologized at dinner before the whole school and fortunately Gabrielle had forgiven her, even if Fleur hadn't really.

During the following week, Najira had been the perfect picture of obedience. And Fleur had started to relent on her grudge.

This however didn't last.

Two weeks after the fight, she came, storming into Gryffondor common rooms.



“Harry, I’d like to have a word with you,’ she said in a strained voice, ignoring the usual lovesick glances sent her way by most of the males present.

Puzzled, Harry stood up and was all but dragged towards Najira’s room. Realizing this, he nearly gave in the urge to bang his head on the nearest wall.

Fleur snarled the password to the set of rooms and pushed Harry inside.

He froze at the sight.

Najira was lounging on the bed, one student, a Hufflepuff Sixth year, massaging her shoulders. Another, a Ravenclaw was working at the desk, writing furiously. Harry was pushed to the sides as a Gryffondor and a Slytherin ran in the room carrying a basket filled with cakes, fruits and sweets.

Disgust filled him.

At that moment, Najira looked up.

Harry nearly took a step back.

Her eyes still had that uncommon shades of violet but seemed covered by a white veil, as they had been when she...

He tried to dispell the pictures which came to his mind.

It seemed that seeing him had an effect on the part-Veela. She shook her head and horror spread on her features. She scrambled to her feet, oblivious to the surprised looks of the four students in the room. She shouted for them to get out.

Bewildered, they obeyed nonetheless, still under the thrall of the Veela’s attraction.

“Athar, I was...”

Harry raised his hand, cutting her.



“I saw everything I needed to see.”

“You don’t understand, I...”

Harry didn’t want to hear her excuses again, not now... He turned to face Fleur.

“I’ll speak to your parents, treat her as you would your sister, had she done that.”

Deaf to Najira’s pleas, demands he listened to her, apologies, he walked out, heading to the Delacours’ rooms.

The talk was a hard one. Fleur’s parents had lowered her blocks a bit, to make her used to her powers little by little, training her at the same time to contain her thrall, or to use it. They had thought her to be able to handle this little part of her original power.

But after a few weeks deprived of her abilities, she had seemed to be overwhelmed, even if she had appeared to fare well at first.

It was decided she would accompany them to a Veela community, in France. And she would stay there as long as it would be deemed needed for her to control her urges.

He walked back to Najira, steeling himself for the confrontation.

As he opened the door, his eyes were met with the sight of a trashed room, Najira lying in the middle, hair in disarray and tear stains on her cheeks.

He sighed. It wasn’t fair either on her or him. She was not the only one to blame for this mess, but it was so difficult for him to remain objective...

With a wave of his hand, the room was back to his original state. Bending, he picked her up and carried her to her bed. Gently he laid her on it, putting a blanket on her.

He would let her rest, she would leave tomorrow.



## **End of the Flasback**

She had left, after much pleading, begging, threatening, she had complied. She left, crying, making Harry feel extremely bad about it. But she was too much of a danger at that moment.

He sighed; well, he would deal with this later.

He managed to reach his room and for once had a quiet day.... something which had become a rarity.

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Between the Masters, the researches going on about Voldemort's ritual, his training, Harry also helped reinforcing the wards on several key places, as well as catching up with the things he had missed while away, under Hermione's tutoring, July literally flew by.

Voldemort had been extremely quiet, something which had been worrying the Order a lot. Snape had been convoked a few times, but didn't managed to find anything... A whole new area had been added to the Dark Lord's fortress, but for what purpose, none of their spies knew.

Speaking of Snape, he should be returning from his latest meeting in a few minutes, and Harry had been told to go wait for him at the edge of the anti-apparition ward, in case he needed medical attention. Though not that great, his healing skills had been deemed enough by Mrs Pomfrey who was currently away, having been called at the new resistance headquarters, it seemed several wizard had fallen victims to some kinds of drug and there weren't enough healers there to care for everything.

Fortunately it was nightfall, or Harry would have been roasting under the sun. He paced, waiting for his former professor to apparate.

A soft pop warned him of his arival, but he couldn't stop himself from drawing his wand.

"Stop with the dramatics, Potter, I'm definitively not in the mood for this," snapped the sour man.



Harry didn't replied and walked back to the castle. Snape didn't seem injured and if he felt well enough to insult him, then he must be indeed ok. A nice Snape would have had him worried.

As they climbed the stairs up the castle entrance, the Potion teacher turned to Harry.

"Oh, Potter, Detention tonight at eight for drawing your wand at a teacher."

Rolling his eyes, Harry shook his head.

"Yes, sir."

Nodding briskly, the man strode away, his robes billowing around him, but not able to prevent himself from limping slightly.

Harry felt a bit of concern for him, but quickly squashed the thought, after all, Snape was a grown-up wizard, and a Potion master, he could take care of himself.

The day passed slowly, Harry spent it with Hermione, Ron, Padma, Zabini and Justin.

They went over the training of the junior Order, and on their action.

In case of an attack on the school, the Order was responsible for the students' security. Escape's routes had been made, thanks to the marauders' map. Safe rooms had been readied, and booby traps laid thorough the school, dormant for now, but they could be activated with a simple command.

Every students knew who to follow if the bells should ring.

Harry stayed mostly silent as they showed him their plans. He made a few suggestions here and there, but didn't comment much. His mind was a bit elsewhere.

Voldemort's silence was foreboding, he had tried to use his connections, but he had had no visions for the last weeks, and the Dark Lord had erected strong barriers around his mind. Somehow,



those barriers seemed unnatural. It was a strange feeling, but as he had tried to slip through them, he had barely avoided being trapped in them. No barriers acted like that. Not even Arxeren had been able to explain this.

Something else weighed on his mind. Teneb had told him that Celen and Valera were encountering more and more opposition, back at Horevald. Even with the Dragons' support, they barely could enforce their decisions. Teneb spent most of his days reading reports about his homeworld from his father and his friend and communicating with them. Harry had started to help him through his mass of papers, classifying them, trying to find solutions to a problem he knew deep down had none.

As he pondered on his blood brother's dilemma, he missed the strange looks Hermione kept sending him, as well as the calculative glint in Zabini's eyes or the darkening of Ron's glance.

Dinner was a quiet affair, at Gryffondor's table. Harry ate with Teneb, quietly discussing the recent developments in the Elfish world. They carried on this conversation until it was time for Harry to leave for the dungeons.

At eight, Harry was knocking on the door of the Potion's classroom.

Snape opened it but to Harry's surprise, he exited the room and closed it behind him, locking it with various charms and placing a few alarms on it.

With a sharp motion of his hand, he indicated Harry to follow him.

They went down the corridor and stopped before the painting of a forest.

"Sherbet lemon"

Harry blinked. Sherbet lemon. Snape was using the name of a sweet as his password? Hadn't he been in front of his teacher, he would have pinched himself to be sure he wasn't dreaming. But dream Snape or not, you did not do so in front of the Potion professor.



He followed him inside, trying to not be too conspicuous in his assessment of the man's rooms.

The rooms were quite different from the vampire's hole he was rumoured to live in: a large desk with a comfortable looking chair in front of a large fireplace, no couch, but two armchairs, one looking considerably newer than the other, though it might be due to the lack of visitors then to a later acquisition. The walls were stone ones, with a few paintings and several shelves supporting a large stack of books neatly organized.

Snape muttered a few words and the light brightened, making Harry more acute to the lack of colors. Sure there was the wood, but other than that, nothing... except the Slytherin banner pinned above the mantle of the fireplace.

"Is your curiosity satisfied?" The voice was snappish. "Yes? Then move in, Potter, I have better things than dealing with dunderheads at night!"

Wordlessly, Harry obeyed.

Standing in the middle of the room, he tried to figure what was the safest course of action. Sit in the armchair? Too bold. Sitting in the chair by the desk was a definite no, it wouldn't have changed a thing to have it labelled property of Severus Snape. He wasn't crazy enough to sit on the desk and leaning on the walls was too casual. So what?

Deep inside, he knew that no matter what, it would be the wrong thing to do. Furrowing his brows, he glanced once again around the room, trying to solve his dilemma.

Well he didn't have to wonder for a long time as the older man waved his wand, conjuring a chair as he started pacing through the room.

Harry eyed the piece of furniture, then shot a look at Snape who didn't look like he was about to sit anytime soon.

Sit or not?



Sitting would mean putting himself at a lower level, giving Snape the advantage. Not sitting would be disregarding a teacher's order.

Finally he chose to sit, no need in exasperating the man further. He didn't miss the small glance sent his way, nor the calculating glint in the Slytherin's eyes.

"Done, Mr. Potter?"

Harry didn't even bother to answer.

"Now, you'll be organizing all my files: I want you to order them by alphabetical order and gather those of close-related subjects together. Your detention will end as soon as you're done. Now, I don't want to hear one more idiotic comment from you or you'll find yourself cleaning the Owlery with a toothbrush."

Snape ruffled through the papers then handed one to Harry.

The young wizard was staring incredulously at him, his hand poised in the air. He took it, automatically and read the words written in Snape's characteristic penmanship.

*Potter,*

*For once in your life, follow my orders and for god's sake don't speak a word until I say so.*

*You're going to drink the whole content of the vial on the table, the bright red one. This is a voice changing potion, whose effects you should now, as well as the side-effects; this is to say if you pay a modicum of attention in my class during the past years...*

Harry rolled his eyes, picturing the sneer what was nearly printed with the words.

*But, since focus and memory were always Miss Grange's forte, I should remind you of them. This potion will alter your voice, in this case giving you the voice of Mr. Eddy Travers, a sixth year Hufflepuff. The potion will last for an hour and you'll probably suffer from mild*



*dizziness and a sore throat for the rest of the evening. The sore throat will last longer.*

*This is necessary to trick the spying device of the Dark lord, so refrain from your usual stubbornness and drink the potion.*

Straight to the point, one could never accuse Snape of being wordy...

Harry gulped down the vial's contents, trying not to show his repulsion at the horrible taste. The potion slid down his throat and he felt it start to burn and itch. Gritting his teeth he waited as the feeling dulled and faded to a mild throbbing.

Harry opened his mouth and barely refrained from squeaking when his voice came out quite high-pitched. And Eddy Travers was a sixth year! Even his own voice had started to break and was certainly deeper than this!

He glared at the potion Master who was wearing a smug look.

"Yes Mr. Travers? Are you done with the cauldrons?"

Refraining from snarling at the man, Harry choked out his answer.

"Yes, Professor."

The Dark-haired man seemed to concentrate on something then nodded.

"The thing is deactivated. We can speak until your potion wear out."

Harry raised an eyebrow, confused. What had him speaking like a twelve-year old to do with the spying thing Voldemort placed in his Death Eater?

"It's keyed to determined voices: yours, your friends, Dumbledore's, several known members of the Light fighting forces," Snape snapped, as if talking to an annoying child.

Harry nodded.

"What did you want to talk about, sir?"



“What is going on Potter? “

Harry tilted his head.

“What do you mean by that, sir?”

A vein throbbed on the side of Snape’s neck.

“Who are those frauds? What are they doing here? Under what rules are they staying here?...”

Harry repressed a smile.

“These frauds are masters in their craft, coming from the Dragonriders’ Headquarters. They were ordered to stay here until they changed their view on humans. The rules are the same for all of those living here.”

Severus Snape sighed, rubbing his temples.

“What happened to the Golden-Boy, Potter?”

“He grew up.”

“This remains to be seen. What training did you underwent? The Headmaster asked me to tutor in the areas where you could be... lacking.”

“Why...” Harry closed his mouth, rethinking his question.

“...Was I the one chosen to do so when I’m a recording machine for the Dark Lord?” sneered the Potion Master.

“Yes, sir.”

“Not out of any willingness on my part, Potter. But I happen to be well versed in a few obscure branches of magic... Branches of magic you need to master if you hope to survive this war... I assure you that your Gryffindor luck or your Potter abilities to escape any punishment for your rash actions won’t give you the victory.”

Harry stayed wisely silent.



“Legilimens!”

Immediately, Harry felt something probing through his mind.

At first, he was tempted to let him do so, no use displaying what he knew.

However, he froze when he realized the probe was directed at his worst moments. A memory started to come to the surface of his mind. It was Christmas’ time and he was standing on a cliff, a blade placed against his wrist...

With a powerful shove, he pushed the teacher out of his head, shaking from having to relive this day.

He opened his eyes, which he didn’t remember closing and saw Snape bringing himself on his feet, a few meters away from him.

Before Harry could react, the man had reached his side and uncovered his left wrist, staring at the crescent shaped scars, not missing those due to Garth’s actions.

Looking up, Harry met blank black eyes which regarded him as a new potion he would not mind trying to make.

“Mr. Potter...”

Harry tensed, he didn’t want to talk about that, not now, not later, not ever. Teneb knew, his family too, the masters knew, Celen and Demenor knew, too many people were already aware of this.

“...What went through your foolish mind to pull a stunt like this?”

Harry’s head snapped up and he starred incredulously into his professor’s face. Shaking his head, he started to mutter.

“You don’t understand, you never will...”

After saying those words, he stood up and ignoring Snape’s order to come back, he walked out of the room, head held high.

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The next day, Harry was extremely snappish. He nearly cursed Effilin to the other end of the Forest as the master shot him his usual comments at breakfast.

He had slept very little that night, the memory coming to his mind everytime he closed his eyes. In the end he had gone to Teneb's room to seek some comfort from his brother. The elf had been helpful. After some grumbling, he had sat with Harry and the two of them had talked, played some chess until exhaustion caught up with them. Harry woke up at dawn, followed closely by Teneb, both had become so used to their routine that, unless they were ill or seriously injured or drained, they would always wake up at this time of the day. They had gone to the edge of the Forest to train, but even the workout hadn't been able to soothe his messed emotions.

The looks Snape kept sending him thorough the meals didn't help and he had to go ride Shadow for a good hour to relieve some stress. Lucky followed them a bit but decided to explore a bit as Harry urged Shadows to full speed.

The ride did him some good as he managed to go through dinner in slightly better spirit. Given his attitude at breakfast, most of the students had gone out of his way, only Teneb had stayed with him and remained by his side at dinner.

Dessert was being served when two Aurors burst through the doors. They walked to Dumbledore and started to speak with him in hushed tones.

Harry watched as the headmaster's eyes grew ice-cold. He nodded sharply then turned to McGonagall.

A few minutes later, he left the Hall amidst the whispers of the remaining students, Flitwick and Vector behind him, as well as the two Aurors.

McGonagall rose to her feet and asked for silence.

"All students are to go to their rooms and stay there until a teacher come. Adults will be asked to patrol the corridors and guard the entrances."



Harry felt himself grow cold.

What about him?

He was soon one of the last ones to remain behind as the student walked in a quite orderly fashion. Teneb was still at his side, and he could feel him using some of his natural empathy to cool his anger.

“Mr. Potter?”

Harry turned towards his former Head of House who was standing by the doors of the Hall.

“Come on, we have to put you and your peers safely in your rooms until the fights are over.”

Teneb tensed at his side and he felt himself reacting in the same.

“Professor...”

“Mr. Potter!” she snapped “Don’t make me repeat myself, the headmaster gave me strict orders to keep all the students safe. So follow the members of the Junior Order to the safe rooms and obey them. They know the drills and won’t endanger others. We don’t have time for childish behaviour.”

Teneb winced at these words, but could barely refrain himself from grimacing when he spotted the masters smirking at Harry. By the look of it, Harry had also seen them.

Who this woman thought they were? Children? Scared kids? They had trained intensively for one year. They had earned their names and titles!

Regally, the elf drew himself to his full height, his mark shining on his temple. He could feel Harry’s fire running low around his friend. But suddenly, it disappeared.

He looked at his blood-brother, only to see stony eyes meeting the woman’s. None of them spoke, but she was the first to look away.



"I see," whispered the young wizard.

He left through the doors, not sparing a glance to his old teacher who followed him with a worried glance.

"Go back to playing the little soldier, Kid. Leave the real fighting to your better!" laughed Sarwin.

Harry stopped before resuming his walk up a flight of stairs. Teneb followed him, slowing just slightly before the Transfiguration teacher.

"I hope you realize what you did," he whispered. She gave him a stern look, pointing to the door. A startled yelp made him turn as he was about to exit the room ; he smiled as he caught sight of Sarwin trying to stuff out the blue flames running on the hem of his pants.

He caught up with Harry as the young man strode down a long corridor, none of them spoke, they didn't need to.

Soon, they arrived in a girl bathroom.

Bewildered, Teneb looked around. He had already seen that.... But where? Suddenly he heard a soft hissing and a memory of Harry came back to his mind. A Giant snake, a diary, a sword....

"The Chamber of Secrets?" he said, surprised.

Harry only nodded before jumping in the hole which had appeared where the laboratory had stood. Casting a small repellent charm on his clothes, Teneb slid after him, catching a glint of a translucent face hovering above a toilet seat and peering at him intensively.

After what seems like hours, he stumbled on the grounds, hearing the scrunches of bones under him as he rolled back to his feet.

"Scourgify," said Harry.

Instantly the room was cleaned: centuries of dirt swept away. The bones still remained though, but there were thoroughly cleaned bones.



The two friends headed to the doors of the chambers, and once again, Harry gave the password. Finally they were walking down Salazar Slytherin's room. The Basilisk's body was still here, as it had been only a few hours since its death.

Teneb eyed the massive monster and whistled.

"You killed that thing?!"

"I was lucky," answered Harry, tersely. "Teneb, would you mind sparring?"

Feeling the power still bubbling in his blood brother, the elf nodded.

"Anytime." He summoned his sword to him and raised it, powering it slowly, not to overload the stone. Harry mimicked his action and soon the two friends were caught in a deadly dance.

The blades weren't dulled, neither were their curses. If one of them was to do a mistake, it could end badly for both of them, but that was part of the game: the thrill of the adrenaline pumping through your veins, pushing you to your limit.

Their sparring came to a stalemate twenty minutes later, both of them having raised their blades to the other's neck.

They were panting heavily, having skipped their usual warm up exercises and pulled violent moves. Harry let himself slump to the floor.

"Never again. I'll not be a pawn in this game: too young to fight, but old enough to be expected to off Voldemort.... They'll have to make up their mind."

"You'll have to deal with the riders... If this happens again, they could ask for the removal of your title and your dismissal from our ranks."

Harry nodded. He knew the rules.

"I will, now what about a bit of cleaning. This place sure could use it..."



They set to work and it was well past midnight when they stopped. They had dealt with the Snake's corpse, having harvested the useful parts and getting rid of the rest. They had then repaired the damages Harry had made to the Chamber during his last visit. Then they even had started on cleaning centuries worth of dust, dirt and grim.

They drew on their elements to land straight into Teneb's rooms, waking up a sleeping Lucky.

The fox had taken on resting in the elf's quarters after Seamus hit him by accident with a bouncing hex. Since then he was rarely seen in the Gryffondor's tower.

"Did you feel the wards?" asked Teneb.

"A bit, but they let us slide... Wonder why... Technically we should not be able to do elemental travel in the school."

Teneb shrugged. The magic surrounding this school was quite old, even in Elvish standings. But the odd thing was that it shouldn't be so... After all it had been created about a millennia ago, but the feeling was so ancient it did not matched this. Anyway, he didn't want to try to delve in the intricacies of this type of power. He was powerful, but not that much. Handling this kind of energies would burn him to the core, leaving him magicless for the remaining part of his life. Not something he really wanted...

"Let's rest, tomorrow should prove to be eventful."

Harry nodded gravely.

"True... Can I sleep in your rooms, I don't want to go to the tower tonight."

"No problem."

"Goodnight."

"Goodnight."

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The morning came too soon for Harry's taste. As usual, both Teneb and him went outside for their work-out. They took their horses for a quick walk around the lake, stopping at Hagrid's hut. The half-giant was absent for now. Dumbledore had sent him on one of his mission during the past month and he hadn't been back since then.

"What do you think will happen?..."

"No idea... But there's only one way to find out..." with that the wizard stepped in the Hall. Silence followed him as he made his way to the Gryffindor table, Teneb shadowing him.

The headmaster was back and currently conferencing with the DADA teachers from the different schools. McGonagall leaned on him, whispering in his ear, her eyes set on Harry with a disapproving look in them. Harry found himself not caring.

As breakfast passed, the young man started to hope that his worries might not be justified. However that thought was quickly thrown out of the window as the guests of the castle marched in the Hall. A few of them were smiling widely, while Nerthor and Lienhor were sporting blank faces.

Harry was a bit bewildered by this. Usually, Nerthor would have been one of the first to gloat over something like this.

As the students resumed eating, everybody could feel the tension coating the room. Hardly anyone spoke and all those present were waiting for the trigger to the coming explosion.

Finally, since most were finished with their breakfast, Dumbledore rose to his feet.

"Students, as you'll learn soon enough, the Dark Lord raided the town of Dorval yesterday. They were stopped, but we intervened too late to prevent the death of several member of the community. Know that teachers will be ready to help you, as well as older students, should you need anything. Now, I'll ask you a moment of silence in memory of those who passed away last night."

Thirty seconds later, he spoke again.



“Thank you.”

The hall broke into whispers as the students started to leave their classes. Harry turned to Teneb, signalling for Ron and Hermione to go ahead. The red head looked about to say something, but didn't get the time since Hermione dragged him to their first club of the day: Charms weaving.

“I'm going back to the chamber.”

“I'll come. It's a good place to practice.”

Unfortunately, his last words were overhead by Sarwin.

“Practice what, little human... how to be the perfect submissive? And you think yourself worthy of the Athar's title.”

Nerthor looked around him nervously as students started to stop around them, listening attentively to the exchange.

“Sarwin, not here,” he snapped, not missing the sharp glance of young Teneb.

“What's the matter, Nerthor?!” asked Effilin, frowning. “Don't tell me you're supporting him!”

Nerthor sneered.

“I won't have part in this, not in front of children!”

With that the Mind master exited the hall, followed quietly by Lienhor.

A look of scorn passed on Sarwin's face.

“See what you've done, human. You've corrupted him and some of the scholars; I heard them talk about teaching your people! Teaching your kind!”

By then, the Magis was almost apoplectic, while Harry was growing stiffer and stiffer. Cold blue flames were shining in his eyes.

“What is your point, Master Sarwin?”



The Magis looked smug.

"I call for your destitution of your rank and the erasing of your presence in our midst."

Teneb stepped forwards.

"On what grounds? And who is your witness?"

"On the charge of submission to an inferior, display of activities going against our rules and a breaking of his oath, since he didn't go help innocents last night. I will be his witness," said Edevia, her voice calm.

"Neither did either of you."

The Archery mistress shrugged the argument aside.

"We swore obedience to our King."

Teneb was about to speak when Harry raised his hand.

"Very well. Who will challenge me to prove his words? Or are you spouting non-sense you're not going to see through." His tone was chilling and biting, something which earned him a raised eyebrow from his potion professor, who, like everyone present was watching avidly the exchange.

Words of the altercation had apparently spread, and the hall was filling itself again, a wide circle being drawn around them.

Ron and Hermione, as well as the other members of the junior order, were trying to keep the younger ones at bay, wand in hand, either to shield themselves or to attack. The professors were behaving likewise.

"I will," said Sarwin.

Harry raised his eyebrow.

"Really? Should I remind you that your powers were reduced to human levels? Do you think you can challenge me?"



The Magis' face distorted into a snarl as he started to attack.

They exchanged hexes for a few moments, but it was clear to those watching that Harry had the upper hand, since Sarwin had difficulties fuelling his spells, not being used to the restrictions applied to his power reserves.

Finally Harry threw him against the shields surrounding them. All the time, he had been using his wand, careful not to reveal his abilities too soon.

Thinking he had proven his point, he turned his back to Sarwin and walked towards Teneb.

*Harry! Behind you!*

Teneb's mental cry came barely in time as shouts echoed in the hall.

Without thinking, Harry dropped to his feet, feeling something wheeze above his head.

Looking up, he saw a magical blade make his way back towards him.

Concentrating, he created another one and shot it at the other. The two clashed and exploded in a burst of power which made the walls tremble slightly.

Harry tried to catch his breath, trembling slightly from the adrenalin rush. He didn't see the master rush towards him, dagger in hand. Before he could do anything, he was pushed to the grounds. Looking up, he saw that Teneb had thrown himself at the master, holding the weapon away from his own throat. Sarwin managed to shook Teneb's hold, knocking him aside and strode at Harry's side, his dagger still in hand.

"This will solve the problem!"

The professor were hurrying towards them, but they would not be there in time...



He raised his arm and brought it down as strong as possible, aiming for Harry's heart. The young wizard was too stunned by the swiftness of the past events to react and dodge the lethal blow. With horrified eyes, he watched as his death came closer.

A sharp cry suddenly resonated in the hall, startling everyone and making Sarwin hesitate a bit, enough to allow Harry to gather his wits and roll away. A blue light was getting bigger and in a few seconds, a dragon started to appear.

The Azurean stood in front of everyone, power exuding from him. The magical creature looked around and settled his glare on the Magis.

"To-Tohran?"

The draconian expression hardened.

You no longer have the right to call me by my given name. You broke your oath to me, severing our bond.

Hearing those words, Sarwin dropped to his knees. All masters present couldn't refrain from taking a step backward. Harry paled, as did Teneb, who was back on his feet and at Harry's side, helping him to stand up.

"Tohran! No!" Sarwin was panicked, his skin a sickly shade of grey.

Why shouldn't I? The eyes of the dragon held no compassion for his rider.

"I didn't mean it! It was not that serious!" A pleading was audible in the Magis' voice.

So in addition to being a murderer, you're also a liar..." A deep sadness was heard in his words. "You were warned, so be it! Don't call me again, I won't answer your call, neither will other dragons.

With that said, the Azurean disappeared, leaving a sobbing Sarwin behind. Edevia went to him and pulled him to his feet.



He pulled away from her and looked around with a crazy glint in his eyes.

Finally he set his look on Harry who returned it steadily, not trying to hide the pity he was feeling. With a strangled sob, the master ran out of the hall. Effilin took a few steps towards the doors, but stopped and bowed his head.

People glanced uneasily at each other, trying to avoid to look at Harry, no matter how much they wanted to. The young wizard was staring at the doors, fists clenched. Turning his head, he shot a withering glance at the headmaster and the professors.

"This is all your fault!" he whispered through gritted teeth, before hurrying out, slamming the door behind him. Teneb sighed and walked to the two remaining masters. He whispered a few words to them and the three of them exited quickly the room, ignoring the buzzing hall behind them.

For minutes, Dumbledore tried to regain the calm, to no avail. Finally, he shot some sparks. Silence fell on the students and adults present.

"Prefects, escort your peers to your common rooms and stay there until your head comes. The clubs are canceled for the day."

Harry spent his day pummeling dummies, Dumbledore and the professors debating this new development. Teneb and the masters looking for Sarwin, the scholars doing their work, as usual.

The day seemed to have no end...

Sarwin's body was found at dusk, in the Forbidden Forest, his throat slit, his own bloody dagger still in his hand.

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Here it is, next part in two weeks...

Naia



## **Chapter Twenty-five: Out of control**

Sarwin's body was sent back to his family through a portal the next day and after this, the masters kept their distance with Harry who remained unseen for days. Nerthor and Lienhor were seen more and more often in the Library, helping with the researches, but no more could be said on their thoughts.

The raids intensified and soon a pattern appeared.

The Death Eaters were most of the time separated into groups of four with two younger and less proefficient than the usual servants of Voldemort. The younger ones were wearing black robes, but theirs were lined with green and their mask were black. A serpent was drawn in their back.

They attacked small communities which were less protected than bigger towns, being less probable targets... What was more peculiar was that most of the time, they refrained from their usual killings. But everytimes, they kidnapped people: young adults between eighteen and twenty-eight, living alone, male or female.

Harry and Teneb had been allowed to join the fight after a stormy discussion with the Order's council. Quite a few of them had been adamant about not letting children fight with them. But in the end, Harry got what he wanted. The death of Sarwin weighted heavily on his conscious and he didn't want something like this happening again, the Order be damned.

Since then, he spent his days honing his skills, researching new hexes, charms, enchantments that could be useful, helped by Teneb. All in all, he kept himself busy: he trained, worked, researched and went to his session with Snape three times a week.

The first times were awkward, but they quickly fell back into their old routine, none of them mentioning what had transpired during their first meeting. Harry too happy that Snape had no intention of talking about it, and the Potion professor, preferring to avoid this matter all together to preserve the picture he had of Harry and assuming the boy had found someone better than him to talk to.



They went to stop a raid at least once a week, but most of the time, there was little they could do upon arriving. The Death Eaters left as soon as they saw them, taking their victims with them. Their bodies were usually found days later. They had not managed to find the cause behind those raids. But some of them were conducted with the sole aim of inflicting as much damage as possible. Harry had come to hate those: they usually were targeting muggle towns and left no survivors behind them.

Three of those had already taken place and he had been involved in the last one. What had been noted was that no trainee were among the Death Eaters on those occasion.

Thorough the Muggle world, anti magic groups were rising. Their members would attack at the first sign of magic, be it offensive or not. In Muggle minds, Magic was rapidly becoming associated with massacre. Nonetheless, they managed to inflict some damages to the Death Eaters. Bullets, bombs, booby traps could kill a wizard as easily as a muggle, but this advantage was short lived since the Death Eaters managed to find a type of shield to repel the bullets and to adapt a charm to detect bombs. But had the Death Eaters not learnt to hide their presence and their hideouts, the Muggle might have managed to get the upper hand.

The various governments were forming alliances to try to present a united front to the Dark Lord. A special office had been created to coordinate Muggle and Wizard actions. Said office had been targeted four times and was now just a decoy. The real office had been set underground as most of the muggle resistance installations. Hidden lift would led to those buildings. But even if you managed to reach the lift, you still would have to pass several check points: finger prints, blood sampling, eye print, vocal check... Only people keyed in the system could access these places. Safeguards to prevent magical disruption had been set up. There, teams organised the hiding of muggle towns, the evacuation of designated areas if their spies brought news of a scheduled attack. Others were creating new devices for fighting, spying, protection. They combined muggle and wizarding knowledge to make them as efficient as possible. The Weasley Twins had been working with one of those teams, putting their minds to this task.



On the other hands, except from the information their few spies managed to bring back, they were nearly blind as to Voldemort's plans.

Harry had tried to use his link with the Dark Lord, but the wizard seemed to have managed to close it, something he had been trying to do since Harry had manipulated his magic.

No matter how detrimental it was to their cause, Harry couldn't say he missed those visions. He had however tried to see if he could recreate it, but doing so would mean dive in Voldemort's mind, something which would be quite nefarious to his health...

Today he had been sent, along with Patrick, a sixth year Gryffindor , Steffie, a fifth year Hufflepuff, Klaus, a Durmstrang seventh year, Henry, a seventh year Slytherin, Julia, a former Beaubâtons sixth year, and Greg, a Ravenclaw graduate to go help a group of Order member to bring back Potions ingredients and some other furniture needed from Hogsmead. Teneb had remained at the castle, having to look over several reports for Celen as well as examine several projects of future laws.

The Wizarding town was protected by layers and layers of wards, but despite these protections, quite a lot of shops had closed and several families left.

They quickly gathered what they needed, they started on their way back. The wards prevented the use of Apparition or magical carriages. Portkeys were to be used as a last resort, so they get got ready for a forty minutes walk, shrinking their pursages.

They had barely been walking for a few minutes, when Harry felt a cold feeling seep through his body, a sensation he knew too well.

Dementors.

Cursing, he whirled on his heel and was about to hurry back to Hogsmead when an order member stopped him.

"Where do you think you're going?"



“Dementors are here, they’re going to attack Hogsmead! Can’t you feel them?!”

The man, Danny Warren if Harry remembered well, frowned.

“What are you talking about? Dementors couldn’t step that close to Hogsmead without triggering the wards...”

At this moment a shrill sound was heard.

Harry snarled as he shook off the man’s grasp.

“Happy now? What about going back to help?”

Danny’s face was sombre.

“Listen, you kids take this portkey back to the castle and warn Dumbledore, we’re going to try to hold them back as long as possible... The keyword is lemon drops”

The five other adults nodded and Danny gave Harry a plastic bag..

Harry took the portkey and looked at the others. They sported grim and sullen faces. He then realized that he wasn’t the only one feeling useless. They were trained to fight, but never got the chance to prove their worth... He handed the portkey to Steffie.

“You know what to do Steffie. Dumbledore’s password is Bounty, tell him or any professor you see to send help as soon as possible.”

The young girl was solemn as she took the portkey, whispering the activating word and disappearing before the adults could voice their disagreement.

“What did you do Potter!” shouted Danny.

Harry faced the angry wizard calmly.

“She was the only kid present. I obeyed your order, nothing less.”

The wizard reddened.



“I was speaking of all of you, you idiot!”

Harry glanced at his companions, they each wore stony faces, but he could see a glint of pride at being able to fight for once.

“Kids were never meant to learn to fight,” he replied before taking out his wand and jogging towards Hogsmead, ignoring Danny’s cries to come back.

He kept a slow pace and a few seconds later, Patrick was at his side, then Klaus, Greg, Henry and Julia. All of them were members of the Junior Order and had been trained for this. In Harry’s mind, they deserved to fight.

They irrupted in the village to find dozen of hooded figure floating around, drawing screams from the inhabitants who tried to flee to the safety of their houses. From the bodies laying on the grounds, they had already lost too much time.

With a whispered “Expecto Patronum”, the usual silver stag shot from his wand and charged the closest Dementor, Harry fuelled his Patronus with more power and soon the misty creature took a white glow. As it charged another dementor, instead of pushing it away, its antler pierced through the creature, drawing a chilling scream from it. The Dementor dissolved into thin air and only his robe was left behind as Harry’s Patronus attacked a new one. A Cerberus, a winged serpent, and a bull joined the stag, followed by a wolf, a samourai and a Whomping Willow. New Patronus from the Hogsmead residents joined the fray and soon the Dementors were driven away.

But it seemed that the Dementors had only been the first wave.

As they fled, slight tremors were felt from the grounds.

“TROLLS!”

This cry spread panic through those fighting as Gigantic trolls armed with massive spiked clubs made their way towards them.



Taking in the size of those monsters, Harry was reminded of the one he, Ron and Hermione had defeated, back in his first year... either it had been a baby, or those were a different species.

Hexes started to fly, but none of them seemed to affect them. They grew more and more offensive and destructive as the trolls came closer. After seeing a particularly dangerous cutting hex and a blinding one fail again, Harry unsheathed his sword.

WHAT do you THINK you are doing?

Not now, Arxeren, replied Harry, eyeing the beast, wincing as he sent a man flying, hitting it with his club. The body hit a wall with a sickly crush and the man remained on the ground, not moving.

Sorry about this, but you don't go attacking five-meter high trolls with a meter long sword!

Do you have something better to propose?

There was a moment of silence.

Aim for the junction between the neck and the shoulder, their skin is less thick there and put a piercing charm on your blade as well as fuel your power stone.

Harry nodded.

Thank you Arxeren.

Just be careful with the two Chimera and the Quintaped.

Harry whirled on his heels and sure the three beasts were rampaging through the town. He turned to Patrick.

"Cover my back."

Then he lunged at the closest troll, something which would have been deemed crazy by any sane person. He saw the club coming his way. The trolls might be stupid, but nobody could say they didn't know how to aim.



The weapon was massive, carved into wood with metal spikes placed around it, making it even deadlier than before.

Thanking Arxeren for his drills, Harry cast a dulling charm on the spikes and gathered his strength. Timing himself, he jumped and grabbed one of the spike, hauling himself onto the club.

The troll seemed to sense his presence and started to shake his weapon. Using the spikes as a scale, Harry climbed up, then using the momentum from the shaking, jumped on the beast's shoulder.

Once there, he whispered an activating word in Parseltongue and two blades shot from his heels. Digging them in the troll's shoulder he raised his blade and rammed it up to the base of the neck.

Even if the skin was thinner and the blade magically enhanced, he had to strike three times before feeling his sword dig in the troll's flesh, he pushed it as far as possible, ignoring the painful cries of the beast, the foul scent, the black sticky blood flowing from the wounds.

The Troll stumbled twice, then fell on the ground. Harry jumped off and looked at the massive body shook by a labored breathing broken by painful howls. Closing his eyes, he sent more power in his sword and brought it down as strong as possible. The sound of crushing bones seemed to echoed in his ears as the howls died down.

With a last thought for the deceased creature, he ran towards another one, fuelling even more power into the blade.

He slashed at the troll's leg, cutting it slightly at the tendon, then took one of the darts he always kept, hidden in his belt. This one was a black color stripped with green, the same green than the Avada Kedavra, something Harry found fitting, after all, those darts were coated with one of the deadlier poison he had ever learnt. Careful not to sting himself, he shoved the small thing into the wound and stepped backward, running to a group cornered by two trolls against a wall. He barely acknowledge the loud thud of the fallen troll as poison took over him, shutting his body functions down one by one.

He cast a strong flesh-eating curse, hitting the troll in the middle of the back. A hole the size of a pin head appeared on the greenish skin,



getting bigger and bigger and a reducto in the second troll's eye, as he turned a bit to see what had happened to his companions.

He heard shouts behind him and stepped aside, knowing that reinforcements had come, they would take care of those two.

Harry! The Chimera!

Whirling on his heels, he barely ducked the pouncing creature.

The other one was trotting towards its companion, both of them covered in red blood, pieces of flesh stuck in their jaws.

Not pondering on the origins of said flesh, Harry raised his sword and cleared his mind. He started to center himself, powering his sword at the same time.

The chimeras paced in front of him as he concentrated on the two creatures, occulting everything else, following their every movements.

They stopped pacing and crouched. He fell into a defensive stance, waiting for their move.

With a snarl the two beast attacked.

No matter how hard Harry would try, he would never recall what happened next. Everything was a blur of steel, fur, claws, jaws, hooves, pain, howls and blood.

He came back to reality after a while and found himself standing, covered in a dark red blood, deep gashes running down his arms, a bite at his leg which sent up a throbbing pain.

His sword was lowered to the ground, he had somehow taken to handle it with one hand at some point in the fight since he held his dagger in the other hand. Both blades were stained with blood and other liquids. On his side rested the bodies of the chimeras.

He nearly retched at the sight of the mutilated creatures.



He looked around and met the gaze of the other fighters, Klaus, Greg, Julia and Patrick.

All of them were staring at him, something akin to fear shining in their eyes for most of them. He took a few steps towards his peers, but stopped as they couldn't refrain from backing away from him. His eyes widened, as he tried to shake this thought.

They were afraid of him? He looked in their eyes. Yes, they were scared of him, he could see it in them, they looked at him as he had seen Muggle looking at Death Eaters at the beginning of the war: They didn't know what they were, but they knew to fear them and stay away.

He muttered a cleaning charm, making the blood disappear from the blades to prevent them from rusting. He turned away and ran out of their sight, the picture of their fearful faces printed in his mind.

As soon as possible, he used his Elemental abilities to appear on the edge of the Forbidden Forest. He sped through the hall and up the stairs. Later he would wonder how he managed not to break his neck, but then he was not thinking.

How could they be afraid of him?! He had vowed to defend them with his life, he had sacrificed everything to protect them, he had killed for them. Sure it was trolls, but he had killed! Didn't that count for something?!

He went straight to Teneb's room.

On his way, he brushed past Hermione and Ron, not seeing them as he tried to reign his emotions. He did not notice them sharing a glance then following him.

Once he reached his blood brother's rooms he had worked himself up and was seething. He snarled the password, opening the door wide and stormed inside.

Teneb was sitting at his desk, examining maps and reports he had received the day before from Horevald. He was trying to find a solution to one of the countless problems Celen was encountering



when he heard his door opening. Since only Harry knew his password, he didn't look up, muttering a greeting.

The sound of repressed sobs got his attention however.

"Harry?"

He got up and left his office, going into the living room. There, he was met with a bloody Harry kneeling on his floor.

His blood brother was distraught, that much he could feel through their link. He had closed it for his work to help him concentrate on his task.

Crouching next to him, he hauled him to his feet and helped him to the couch, not caring about the bloodied traces they left on the carpets and floor

Slowly, he managed to piece the story together and it left him boiling as Harry cried himself to sleep, slumped on his shoulder as he soothed him, running his hand in his hair, like his mother did every time he was upset....

Once he was sure Harry was sleeping, he cast a cleaning charm on him, getting rid of the blood and other things covering him, transfigured his clothes into pyjamas and carried him to bed, as he often did for his little sister, Delia.

He went back to the living room, to clean the mess he had left. It would also calm him down before he went to the Headmaster to say a few chosen words to him.

As he stepped in the room, he saw that Ron and Hermione were sitting in chairs they had probably conjured.

"What are you doing here?" he snapped. He was NOT in the mood to deal with them at the moment.

Ron glared at him while Hermione just raised her eyebrow.

"Are you deaf?"



“Are you together?” Ron blurted, cutting Teneb.

The question shocked him so much, he choked.

“What?!”

Ron crossed his arms.

“Are you together?” he repeated, articulating every words.

“Who? Harry and me?” the young elf asked, disbelievingly. “What made you come up with something that stupid!”

The red-head’s cheeks colored hotly.

“I don’t know! Maybe the fact you’re always with him and that he hardly spend time with us. And when he does it’s always Teneb this, Teneb that! He’s always speaking of you and how great you are! And then we saw you a few minutes ago! You were groping him! And you carried him to your room!”

Ron took a deep breath.

“We want to know what’s going on, Teneb. You have to admit the situation between Harry and you is a bit peculiar for two males, unless they are involved with each other...” said Hermione

Teneb couldn’t refrained from laughing. The thought was so... unbelievable! This however didn’t go well with Ron.

“I don’t see what is funny!”

“It’s just... the very idea is so... so...!” choked the elf.

Hermione’s face remained closed.

“How did you come up with this, anyway,” he asked, once he had managed to calm down a bit.

Ron frowned.



"You're always together, hugging, looking at each other! He always comes to you when he is upset, or he needs comfort. I know he even sleeps in your room sometimes!"

"And so?"

"What Ron means Teneb," cut Hermione, "is that people behaving like this are most of the time involved with each other. You seem too close for friendship, so it only leaves you being lovers."

Teneb rolled his eyes.

"Really... then listen carefully." His voice got more serious. "Harry is a brother to me, and will never be more than this."

"Don't be ridiculous! I have brothers and we never behaved like this!"

"Shut up! Elves are naturally prone to being extremely affective towards their family. It's in our nature. We have so few children than each of them are cherished and should a brother or sister be born, his or her elder will literally spoil him or her rotten!"

Hermione seemed pensieve.

"But Harry is not an elf."

"Good, how observant of you. Of course he isn't! But I'm starting to wonder how close you were to him, if you can't see why he would respond like this."

The young girl was thoughtful for a few seconds, then a dawning look of comprehension spread on her face.

"The Dursleys," she whispered, Teneb's nod confirming her suspicions. "Yes, it would explain this..." she looked up straight in his eyes. "My apologies for our assumptions, Teneb, we'll leave you now..."

She stood up, leaning on the cane Mrs. Pomfrey had forced her to use. She had nearly restored her magical levels, but was still very



easily drained. The cane offered her a support and also a small power boost when it was needed.

Out of Harry's too friend, Teneb preferred her to Ron. The young man was too quick to jump to conclusions or to accuse for his taste and even if he regretted his actions afterwards, it was not enough. He managed to control himself most of the time, but in times of stress his apparent calmness would be washed away by his fiery temper.

He escorted them to the door. "Just one thing," he said suddenly. "Help him tomorrow. He still needs you, more than he realizes it."

He said no more as he closed the door behind them, locking it.

With a sigh, he went back to his office and gathered his papers back in a large box filled with files, parchments and papers. His eyes lingered on a particular report from Celen. Something was going on in Meyan. Demands like those the High Duke had made were disproportionnate, compared to the community living there. Moreover, the sending of four power stones there would require more reasons than shadowy explantions of an unknown, unseen threat...

He sealed the box and placed it back in a large drawer, locking it strongly. Once this was done, he went to check on Harry again and found him resting. Turning, he closed the door soundlessly and left his quarters, marching quickly to the headmaster's office.

With a wave of his hand, the gargoyle sprung aside. He was not in the mood for mind games, not when his blood brother had been hurt. Finding the office empty, he tried to guess where to find Dumbledore... His eyes falling on a bird perch, he smiled slightly, before unleashing his Elemental power and disappearing, blowing all the papers on the desk at the same time without any remorse.

He reappeared outside the Order of the Phoenix meeting room, under the school. His arrival had gone unnoticed to all of those present and he was able to listen to the talks going on.

"... gruesome! He slaughtered them!"



“He didn’t show anything, it was as he didn’t feel anything, as if he was elsewhere as he sliced through their bodies.”

“That’s true, I’ve never seen a more disgusting killing. They were cut open alive!”

Someone said something else Teneb couldn’t catch.

“Maybe, but he had no problem killing them. It didn’t seem to matter to him. What can we expect next?!”

There were some undinstinct mumbling.

“I’m telling you, the boy is turning Dark!”

This seemed to send the room into an uproar.

Teneb chose to step in then, before the situation went out of hand.

He was met with a small chaos. People were standing, shouting, others were shaking their heads, arguing loudly. Others were shaking their fists in the air. Some were trying to appease everyone and break the fights that had started, with little if no success.

He remained standing in the door, waiting to be noticed when he caught the headmaster’s eyes. The man was looking old and weary as he watched the Order fall in shambles.

“Teneb?” The young elf managed to hear his name through the noise. “What are you doing here? Did something happen?...”

People then started to see him and the room fell slowly silent.

“Headmaster.” His tone was cold. “I wanted to ask what type of people were part of your fighting forces, but this answers my question...” he took a few steps in the room, keeping an eye on everyone.

The aged wizard frowned.

“What do you mean?”



Teneb felt his features shift in a condescending mask.

“Well, I was wondering what kind of soldiers your men were, if they could not stomach the sight of spilled blood and killing without thinking the one handling the sword Dark.”

He raised his hand.

“I don’t care about what you have to say. Harry did what he had to do, something none of you did, and no one can fault him for that, nor bad-mouth him in his back.”

“He slaughtered them! He murdered those beasts!”

Teneb’s cold blue eyes fell on Danny Warren.

“And what would have you done in his place? Cuddled with them?” he asked with scorn, his voice deceptively calm.

The man reddened and looked down for a few seconds, then up again.

“Subdued them, trapped them...”

Teneb eyed him scornfully.

“When you’ll find a way to subdue rampaging chimeras without being killed in the process, tell me. I’ll be interested to learn how do it.”

His gaze swept the room, lingering a bit more on a few faces.

“Hear me now. Should Harry come to me once more in the state I found him today because of your thoughtless actions, we’ll leave you to your fate and he’ll come with me.”

“Harry would never desert us!” cried a red-head woman.

Teneb shrugged.

“Keep on going like this and he will do so eagerly.”



“The elves won’t accept him back,” said Dumbledore, his arms crossed on his chest, the twinkle in his eyes dimmed to a small spark.

“My family will, make no mistake of that,” replied Teneb.

The Headmaster nodded slowly.

“Very well, if we both agree, I’ll leave you to your discussions. Have a good evening.” And with that the young elf disappeared back to his rooms where Harry was still sleeping. Changing, Teneb then transfigured his couch in a comfortable bed and fell in a deep slumber

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Harry had been having a nice dream for once: he was flying through clouds of sweets and chocolate... Childish maybe, but good.... However when one of the clouds transformed into an Arxeren look-alike, he knew he wasn’t in dreamland anymore....

Mature, Harry, Very mature.

No one forced you to watch.

Teneb should be here soon, meet in the plane.

The guardian vanished and Harry was back among clouds of sweets...

Grumbling about how much it would cost the guardian to say please for once, he focused, and found himself on the plane.

For once the plane looked a bit... sombre. A table covered with papers and two chairs waited for him. A soft whisper of wind alerted him of Teneb’s arrival.

What’s the matter? I was sleeping....

Sorry to interrupt your beauty sleep, Teneb, cut Arxeren, But Kalia and I received an urgent call from Demenor’s guardian tonight.

The elf frowned.



I thought you kept the contact between guardians at a minimum...

The Emnag guardian nodded her reptilian head.

We do, so you can measure how much dire the situation should be to have this happening.

Both the Athars nodded.

Teneb, you need to go back to Horevald tomorrow morning, as soon as possible. Things are not going well for Celen and Valera.

It's about the situation in Meyan?  
Partly, but it's even more serious than this.

Harry turned to Teneb.

Meyan?

Teneb shook his head.

I can't believe you didn't even got a geography lessons of our world. He paused, gathering his thoughts and suddenly a picture of the Earth appeared in front of them. After the Parting, four main lands were created for us: Arthania, where Horevald was built: the biggest of the four lands, you called it Atlantis in your old legends, Meyan, or Xanadu for humans, Ynris or Avalon and finally a group of three smaller islands: Jya, Keis and Lyn, forming a triangle. Each lands, except Arthania is ruled by a High Duke who represent the Royals and answer only to them.

Harry looked at the map, a bit overwhelmed at seeing large red blipping points showing the location of the different lands.

I'll explain it to him later, interrupted Arxeren. You need to get ready Teneb. On the table are what you need to know and pack. Don't waste time.

With that said, the guardian disappeared.



Teneb rushed to the table and started to rummaged through the papers, skipping over them, occasionally cursing lowly.

Harry imitated him, though at a slower pace.

From what he could gather, Teneb's fears for the past weeks were becoming true. The High Duke of Meyan, someone called Gerian, had been gathering allies and set up a force to be reckoned with. He had been getting more and more hostile to Valera: often opposing her or offering more or less polite refusals to some of her demands, ignoring her messages or orders... Yesterday every contact had been severed between Meyan and Horevald. Celen thought the situation dire enough to ask for the return of one of the Athars. Teneb was the logical choice as Harry's return would only fuel the problems.

He put the papers back on the table and with a thought, make everything disappear. With a loud sigh of weariness, he turned to Harry who was starring blankly in the swirling greyness surrounding them.

Do you think we'll get out of this, Harry?

The young wizard shook his head.

I don't know, but no matter what happen, we'll face it.

Together?

Teneb handed him his forearm.

Together. repeated Harry, clasping his own forearm with Teneb's.

With that they parted, and Harry was once again sucked into dreamland, but no longer was he flying. He dreamt of clashing swords, roaring fires and shadowy figures roaming the earth, spreading destruction around them.

He woke up earlier than usual, drenched in sweat and panting from his dreams. As he tried to catch his breath, memory of last night's events came back to his mind and he shot out of bed, taking minutes



to shower and get dressed. He found Teneb in the living room, putting the final touch to his packing, organizing his papers.

“You’re leaving.”

Teneb looked up, his eyes sad.

“I am needed there. And I’m starting to think that should things turn to the worse, you’ll be called back too.”

Harry frowned at this but chose not to ask about it.

“When?”

“As soon as Gae arrive...” said the elf, closing his last bag before shrinking it.

They stayed silent after that, going through their morning training as usual, then going to breakfast, staying close to each other, enjoying each other’s presence as long as they can.

Breakfast was barely finished when they both felt the surge of energy announcing the arrival of their bonded, as well as the tingling of their bond. They both stood up and walked to the Quidditch pitch, aware that they were followed.

They found Rexeran and Gae waiting there and quickly headed to their respective dragons, both basking in the acceptance and love from the two creatures. Harry buried his head against the scaly neck of Rexeran, realizing how much he had unconsciously missed the mighty beast.

I’m sorry I could not be there for you, Astyan. We went to the dragons of your world. They are like children but they are starting to learn and our visit was not in vain.

“I just wish we could share what normal riders share.”

Raxeran turned his rainbow eyes towards Harry, meeting his own green ones.



We do share the same bond they have, we're even linked to a deeper level, but we'll never be allowed to act like they do... This is our fate, Astyan, like it always was... I will remain with you for as long as I'll be able to, to teach you the ways of the Dragonmasters, but there'll come a time when I'll have to leave you once more.

"Couldn't I follow you?"

Rexeran's look seemed to pierce him.

No... for now, no powers could allow you to walk the lands where my race rules, but who knows?...

Harry nodded, accepting his words, trusting the dragon to tell him the truth. He turned as a hand fell on his shoulder.

Teneb stood in front of him, dressed in full Athar's garb, his mark shining. With a wave of his hand, he stood dressed alike.

None of those watching could miss the similarities between them, both in appearance and mannerisms.

They clasped their arms together.

"Ilan ory sianter," whispered Teneb.

"Ilan ory saroll," replied Harry, letting the words of his old pledge roll from his tongue.

"Desen hela athia"

"Lith tarx jomi"

They shared a smile.

"Good luck, brother," finally said Harry, withdrawing his arm. "Be safe"

"Good luck to you too, brother."

Gae and Rexeran watched this attentively.



History had a knack for repeating itself. They had been right, they knew it, now, but they just hoped that for once the story would find another end.

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Moments later, he stood, leaning on Rexeran, watching the sky. Teneb had left.

But you're not alone, Astyan

"I'm not."

Harry sensed people coming, but he didn't turn, keeping on caressing Rexeran's scales.

"He's gone," stated one of the newcomers.

It was Ron's voice and Harry was a bit bewildered to sense some relief in his old friend's voice.

"He is."

He turned and faced Ron and Hermione. He could feel two more people here, hidden under invisibility charms, plus one other listening from the forest.

"Will he come back?"

"He might."

"Alright."

Harry could not miss the slightly dejected note present in this word.

"Is there a problem, Ron?"

The red-head looked about to say something, but bit back whatever he had been about to say.

"Nothing really important, Harry."



He's jealous, Astyan, that could be a danger...

Rexeran's mental voice echoed in Harry's mind.

What would he be jealous about?

That I don't know...

"We should go back to the castle," said Hermione, growing uncomfortable in the silence.

"Alright, go ahead, I'd like to spend some time with Rexeran."

They nodded and left towards the school's doors. Harry hopped on Rexeran's back and both of them sprang in the air, reveling in the completeness of their bond.

I'll bring you somewhere where you'll be able to learn a part of our history and ways, something you would normally learn during your second year of training,

Harry sent his agreement through their link and seconds later, they disappeared from the sight of those still watching.

Harry was not seen at all that day, spending all his time with Rexeran in a strange place he would not be able to remember anything except the power surrounding him like a cloak. There he listened as Rexeran spoke of past days, of the link that bonded them, of its powers.

He returned to the school late at night and went straight to his rooms, exhausted, though he didn't understand why, having not done anything exerting.

He went to sleep quickly and did not wake until the dawn. Going to the chamber for his morning training, he felt the absence of Teneb as he went through his usual routine alone.

A week passed like this and as he entered his rooms after a particular gruesome session with Snape, he stopped dead in his track upon seeing who was waiting for him.



“Sirius?”

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Draco Malfoy was sitting in the window sill, watching as the sun started to rise, announcing the beginning of another day. He had come to hate this moment since it meant another day to go through. He didn't want the sun to rise, but no matter how much he wished it, the sun would pierce through the mist surrounding the Dark fortress and another day would start. He gave a look to his calendar. Only a bit more than one week and he would be back at Hogwarts. But he knew that it was too late for him; he should not have come, should have stayed within the castle walls, even if it meant risking the wrath of his Lord and his father... Had he done so, he would not be sitting every morning there, wishing the sun not to rise. A sharp knock was heard and with a sigh, he got up and started to ready himself for the day's trials. As the summer was coming to an end, the final test was nearing... He showered and dressed as fitted for his status: black pants, a black shirt with silver runes embroidered on the collar and black war-robos with the silver and green winged serpent, showing to all those looking at it that he was one of those chosen by the Lord to be one of His Children, one of His serpents.

He fingered the collar which had been placed on him the night the Dark Lord had made his choice among his followers' children.

It seemed so long ago that he had been brought within the Dark Lord's presence.... So long...

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He had been ushered to his room where he had found an outfit laid on his bed. Black, black and more black. He didn't like wearing so much black.... With his complexion and fair hair, it made him look like an aristocratic vampire: he didn't mind it too much, but it got annoying.

Knowing better than to voice his thoughts on the matter, he quickly changed and waited for his father or a servant to come and tell him to go down.



Five minutes later, he was called downstairs and they left the manor on foot. His father was wearing his Death-Eaters robes, but no mask and his mother was wearing a black gown. The cut and the little serpent placed on her right breast showed her to be a Death Eater's wife, though not a servant of the Dark Lord.

Once they got outside of the wards surrounding Malfoy Manor, they got ready to apparate.

Draco sent a last look to his house, not knowing when he would see it again.

They landed in a dark hall. Other people were already here, waiting and talking in hushed whispers. He recognized Marcus Flint's huge frame. Two girls and their parents were talking together in a corner. Vincent, Gregory, Millicent and Pansy were huddled together. As Draco surveyed those present, he noticed that most of them were still at Hogwarts. Only a fifth of them seemed to be over seventeen years old; the others' age ranking from thirteen to seventeen. All the houses were represented, even Gryffondor, a fact which surprised the young Slytherin.

He remained at his parents' side, careful not to show any feelings.

After what seems like hours, the room was crowded and Draco had troubles not showing his annoyance at being kept waiting like a nobody... Malfoy never waited for anything... Finally a small echoed in the room and a house elf appeared.

"The Master asks for your presence..."

The creature was trembling with fear, dressed in a black uniform with the dark mark printed on the front and back. It disappeared as soon as it had delivered its message.

The whispers intensified as doors Draco had not even noticed opened. Walking out in an orderly fashion, the Death Eaters guided their children in the main Hall, the place used for most meetings by the Dark Lord.



The hall was bathed by a dim light, making it look sinister. Voldemort was sitting on his throne, Nagini curled on the grounds, her head resting at his feet, tail moving from time to time. He was dressed in Dark green robes with the Slytherin crest embroidered on his right breast and small serpents coiled ornating the hems and collar of the outfit. Besides his red eyes, he had recovered a human appearance: tall and slender with long black hair, an aristocratic set of features. He exuded power, charisma, intelligence; but a crazy glint hadn't left his eyes for those who had known him for the longest time. Two men were hiding in the shadows behind him, waiting for his command.

He stood up and every Death Eaters fell on one knee, bowing their heads, leaving only the children standing, looking around, not sure about what to do: Should they remain standing or bow like their parents?

Draco, remembering a talk he had with his father a few days before leaving at Easter, locked eyes with the Dark lord, bowed his head, acknowledging the very man he had been raised to serve and then kneeled like the Death Eaters. Keeping his head down, he heard the sounds of clothes moving and knew others had followed his example.

After a few minutes, during which Draco had a hard time reining his urge to raise his head and not moving, as the pain in his knee got worse from staying in a position that uncomfortable, he heard the Dark Lord stand up.

"Rise my faithful."

As one, everyone got up.

"So you complied to my request and brought me your children... They will be rewarded for your fidelity, as will you, should they be chosen to be part of my Children, my Serpents."

He looked past his shoulder.

"Jan, Nathael, bring the crystal and cast the spells," he ordered.



The two men bowed and walked to a small altar, uncovering a large stone, filled with a blood red swirling liquid substance a little over the half.

“Death Eaters, bring your children forth as you are called.”

Then started a long listing of names: The parents would drag their progeny before the two men who would whisper a few words. Most of the time the stone remained inert, but in a few occasion, the liquid glowed and a deep hum was heard.

Every time this happened, the child was sent to Voldemort’s side.

When Draco was called, twelve had already been chosen, Marcus being one of them. His head held high, he walked in what he hoped looked like a confident stance to those Voldemort had called Jan and Nathael.

Despite being close to them he couldn’t hear what enchantment they cast. He felt something probe harshly in his mind and in his body, discarding his barrier, piercing his magic. He forced himself to remain upright and not shudder as the invasion continued. Looking straight at the stone, he saw the liquid swirl in a hypnotising like manner. His heart nearly broke when he saw it glow and heard the hum. Looking at his father, he saw the satisfied look on his face and couldn’t repress a pang of sadness. He was handed over to someone the Wizarding world regarded as a maniac and all his father could do was smiling? He shifted his gaze to his mother.

Narcissa Malfoy had never been an affective and demonstrative person. She had always been cold and distant, even to her son. But looking at her, Draco could see her fear and resentment: fear for him, for what was to happen, resentment against Lucius for agreeing to this.

It helped to know he would be missed somewhat.

In the end they were twenty two be chosen.



With a few more words, Voldemort dismissed his servants and the only ones to remain in the room were the two unknown Death Eaters, the youths and Him.

He turned his gaze to the younger ones present in the room.

“Some of you will become part of my Elite: the best of my servants. You will be trained to better your peers and develop your potential to its fullest. Others will be my serpents: my very own. They will only answer to me and I will personally take care of their education. Nathael, Jan, if you could start the spell.”

The two men, still holding the stone started to mutter. This time the words were spoken in a harsh and throaty language.

Draco didn't know what it was, but he was feeling more and more uncomfortable as they kept on chanting. He felt on fire and sweat drops started to glide along his face, chin and jaw. Slowly Voldemort glided in front of them, stopping from time to time to pull a teenager from the rank.

He halted in front of the Malfoy's heir.

“You,” he simply said, pointing to him.

Wordlessly, Draco bowed and went to join those who had been chosen already.

Once the Dark Lord was done, they were ten. Taking Jan's arm, he covered the dark mark and soon four men arrived, none of them Draco recognized.

“Take them to your quarters, they are your new recruits. Start their conditioning tomorrow.”

The four Death Eaters nodding, without a question and motioned to the youths to follow. Soon the ten students were the last left.

“Very well, my serpents, come and kneel before me,” said The Dark Lord.



Knowing that refusing such a blatant order would be suicide, Draco and the others obeyed.

“I will give you a gift, a mark proving to all who see that you are to be my own, should you survive your training and initiation...”

He walked to Draco who was the first in line.

“Young Malfoy...”

He felt a cool, slightly bony hand take his right arm and pull up the sleeve. A burning sensation spread through him.

“This will be your sign, my little serpents, visible only to those knowing of its presence. And this collar will show my other servants who you are...”

Draco felt a cool, metallic something being placed around his neck and he nearly snarled. He better not be collared like a dog. He was no pet! Restraining himself strongly, he merely felt his eye twitch.

Draco bowed deeply before the man, trying not to show the pain he was currently in. He also refrained from looking at the mark, choosing instead to glance at the one next to him: a tall blond girl, with pale skin and light blue eyes, Natasha Simon if he remembered well... she was a transfer from Beauxbâtons and had been sorted in Gryffondor... He looked down at her forearm and saw a black design printed there: a dagger ensnared by a large serpent. The flesh was bleeding red and black, as if the tattoo had been printed with a red-hot iron rod.

At least, it wasn't as ugly as the Dark mark... Draco had been slightly appalled to know he would have to bear this foul tattoo for the rest of his life.

Once the ten of them had been branded, Voldemort had left them, telling them that servants would take care of them and that their training would begin the next day.

This night, Draco slept very little, trying to understand the man he was now serving.



The months had seemed to stretch as the Dark Lord drilled them with spells, curse. They were to practice on each other, to give them more drive to learn the proper counter-curse or the good way to dodge. Failure to cast a spell earned them a Crucio, the more time it took you to get it right, the longer you were put under the curse each time.

Draco remembered his first time. He hadn't been able to cast a Deletrius hex on a rat. The charm was to make the victim rot from the inside... It killed after days of agony. He had barely had time to register his failure that he felt himself be pierced by hundreds of burning knives. His every nerve ends were sending message of excruciating pain to his brain. It lasted two seconds, but to him it was two minutes.

The morning they underwent a physical training, with the ones part of the Elite: they ran through trapped circuit, having to dodge spiked clubs, walk on moving bars above pits filled with serpents, crawled, walked, jumped... After an ten inutes break they moved to fencing. They were put in groups of four and each groups was assigned a master.

Draco didn't count the number of hit he had taken from the man during training. He was a thin man with the face of a ferret, ash blond hair, dull grey eyes, thin bloodless lips which seemed to be always frozen in an ugly sneer.

All the time, they had to recite the rules of the Dark. Should they forgot a line or miss one, they would be assigned a punishment during their only free hour. After fencing, it was lunch break, then they went to Voldemort for the whole afternoon. They would learn curse, cast them, duel... without getting a moment of rest. Dinner was followed by a period of study during which they researched frantically new curses for the next day, or a shield or counter to one they had been subjected to during the day. They also were assigned runic research for the rituals they would be expected to perform sooner or later. Ritual magic was a pain for Draco. He could feel it just beneath his fingers but didn't seem to grasp its concept fully. There always seemed to lack something.



Their nights were also part of the training. After a few days, Draco had felt himself think in ways and act

quite differently than he would have before.

They were being conditioned, little by little and he soon found out the cause.

Every night, they had to drink a potion which reduced the strain of the day on them and somewhat replenished their reserve, but it also left their minds opened to suggestion.

It was always the same ones

“Serve Voldemort”

“Voldemort is my master.”

“His orders are my commands”

“My life is his to deal with”

“I must serve and obey Voldemort”

“I must serve and obey the Dark Lord”

“The mudbloods are filth that must disappear”

“I will destroy those opposing my lord”

“I serve...”

The Dark Lord couldn't know how well this conditioning was working. Most of the old families were teaching their heirs how to resist to mental coercion as early as possible. Draco had been taught at five and had proved to have a natural ability for protecting his mind. His father had been proud of him...

It was then easier for him not to fall under the complete control of the Dark Lord, but by no mean did he completely escaped it.



He realised they were slowly moulded into Voldemort's perfect little soldiers, but there was little he could do to fight it. The Dark magic he had been performing was tainting all of them. Everytime you dabbled with it, you yearned for more and more and more..... it was a thirst that never ended. It was a cancer that grew inside of them, getting bigger and bigger every day, invading their mind and heart. They had to be careful, balancing at the edge between sanity and craziness where they would only be driven by their basic instincts, no more than beasts...

Draco had to hand it to his master. Their training had been handled with great care as they were slowly stripped from everything that defined them, before the Lord reshaped them to his liking...

It didn't mean that they had all made it through.

By the end of the summer they were only six of them left.

Ruth Aleson had been a thirteen year old girl, a former Durmstrang student, then home-schooled. She had died after two weeks of training, her body not ready to handle everything: she had been struck with a spiked club during the morning training. The spikes had impaled her, smashing her repeatedly against the wall as the club didn't stop balancing. None of their trainers did anything to help the girl, ignoring her screams. Two of those part of the Elite threw up, not being able to contain themselves at the sight of the mangled body. Blood was being spread with each passage of the club. She had stopped screaming after several seconds, probably the time it had taken her to emptied herself from her blood... None of the serpents flinched. They had already seen worse during those two weeks: having been demonstrated the effects of the curses they were learning, either through videos or on muggles caught during precedent attacks.

The raids had started in August, they would be assigned a 'tutor' for the attack who was supposed to look after them. Their aim was to catch some muggles to practice with... They had criteria they had to follow. Each raid they would have some guidelines: they had to make the muggle follow them of their free will, cast the imperius....



Draco had had a hard time at first, earning himself a full minute under Cruciatus. He never showed it after that.

Martin Durand had been the second one to perish. Being only fourteen, it was only logical that he wouldn't survive what they were put through. He managed to stay alive for a month, out of sheer will and Draco also knew, out of desire to see his parents again. However, he couldn't control his magic as well as his older peers. He did one too many spells and fell unconscious in the middle of a duel.

With time, he could have managed to recover, but showing this kind of weakness was not permitted and Draco would never forget the uncaring expression on the Dark Lord's face as he raised his wand and uttered two little words.

Avada Kedavra

A jet of green light, and all that was left was a corpse. He seemed to be sleeping, except that he was no longer breathing, his heart was no longer beating... and never would.

This curse had fascinated Draco. So much power it held and so simple to cast: two words, an intent and you had killed... He had nearly been disappointed when performing it for the first time. Sure, he had just caused the rat to fall in a coma, not able to power his spell enough, or to put enough intent behind his words, but he had expected some backlash, a rush of power. But he just felt empty, drained, dried... As weeks passed he mastered the curse like many others and was dried to the point he didn't feel it anymore. Casting Avada Kedavra was no different than casting Expelliarmus. He knew he shouldn't feel like this, that Avada was far more dangerous than a simple Expelliarmus, that he was killing. But he could no longer care... Voldemort had done his work right. He could no longer feel.

The Dark Lord had won.

Not all of them had reach this point and Katherine Heoc had been the proof that the conditioning didn't always worked.

She had refused to cast the Avada Kedavra curse, even on a rat, then later on a house elf. The Malfoy heir had been told the story of



the Heoc twins: Katherine and Ptior Heoc were born McAlfays, children of a prominent light side family. The Heocs had learnt they wouldn't be able to have children and tradition demanded they got an heir. By then, the twins had been one year old and people were talking of how gifted they were. Hearing this, the Heocs targeted the family, killing all of them and taking the twins, performing dark rituals to make them theirs.

This was not well known and the twins had been declared dead along with all their family. But Lucius Malfoy had known and told his son, citing this as an example of foolishness. Those children, he had said would never be truly Heocs, no matter how dark the rituals had been, deep inside they would be McAlfays. The magic of this family was too old to be simply overcome by rituals...

Draco had never thought this true until this day.

Katherine had once more refused to perform the Avada as had her twin. She was put under the Cruciatus for three minutes. As she panted for breath, her red hair falling in disarray down her back and in her face, Voldemort raised his wand to punish her brother.

"Anima Deletoria"

She had barely whispered the words, holding a small pentacle made of bones. A large jet of blinding white light shot towards Voldemort who was too surprised to do more than stare at it. The Dark Lord only earned his survival to luck.

Drained by the Cruciatus, Katherine was not able to fuel her curse with enough power for it to be successful.

He was hit by the beam straight in the chest and fell to one knee, one hand clutching his heart, his handsome face contorted in a grimace.

For a minute, nobody moved. Katherine was growing paler and paler and trembling. Voldemort sank to both knees, a pained moan coming from his throat as he tried to fight the girl.

For a moment, she seemed to win but then she collapsed, her breathing erratic.



Ptior rushed to her side, as Voldemort slowly raised to his feet. His face was dreadfully pale and his body shaken with tremors.

“How dare you? You will die for this”

Katherine raised her head, her dark grey eyes holding no fear.

“I’m already dead...”

With a flick of her wand the pentagram transformed in a styled dagger. Without a flinch, she brought the blade to her throat and slit it deeply.

Within seconds she was dead, her last words being for her brother.

“I’m sorry, Ptior.”

The boy broke down cradling his sister’s body in his arms. Muttering her name over and over, he went catatonic.

The breaking of their twin bond had snapped his mind beyond any hope of recovery. He did not relinquish his hold on the corpse he was holding, covered in blood and dirt. He was finally stunned and laid out.

He was seen the next day, sitting at a table, eyes empty, speaking to himself as he talked to his sister. Sometimes he would laugh for minutes without reason, an hysterical note in his voice.

Why they kept him alive was a mystery to Draco. Sure the blood of the McAlfays was powerful, but was it reason enough for keeping this living dead around, that he wondered.

After this episode, the surviving members of the Serpents underwent a heavy week of reconditioning: they were made to drink potions after potions and submitted to long suggestion sessions from two Dark mind masters. Draco managed to preserve his identity, hiding himself as his father had taught him. This technique required a natural resistance to mind tricks, something he had shown and quite a lot of power. He managed to learn how to do it by his twelfth birthday.



Were left six of them: Pansy Parkinson, Damien Gaillard, a Slytherin seventh year, formerly a Beauxbâtons student, Marcus Flint, Natasha Simon, Morgain Tyras and himself.

But out of all of them, it was Morgain that Draco feared. The girl was a former Durmstrang member, sorted in Ravenclaw. She was ruthless and showed a proefficiency for the Dark Arts. She had a flair about them and easily cast the hardest spell. Her only setback was her limited reserves of power and her arrogance.

Voldemort was favoring her among his serpents and she was always sucking up to him, in a way that made Draco's skin crawl.

She looked like Bellatrix Lestrange in her younger years with a more aristocratic face and posture. She was also sane, at least as sane as one could be after months of this treatment.

Morgain was unpredictable and seemed to find pleasure in harming others. She liked to hurt her peers. She had made Natasha her personnal test subject, after trying on others, Draco included. She had a sadistic streak but Draco was no push-over. What he got, he returned two-fold. She had not liked the taste of her own medicine and had not bothered him again. Natasha was a different case. The girl was a wild seer and was vulnerable when in trance, something Morgain took advantage of. Sure, Natasha would retaliate when back to the real world, but Morgain didn't stop...

Voldemort ignored the exactions of his protegee, making Draco wonder about his relationship to Morgain... But in truth he could care less if the Lord made her his mistress.

The summer was coming to an end though, but their training would not. Voldemort had foressen this problem and a week earlier had called them to his private chambers...

oooooooooooooooooooo

They stepped in the dark room: an altar was built in the middle and runic stones had been placed on the grounds, creating patterns all of them were careful not to damage.



A Cup and a sacrificial knife were put on the marble plate.

“Welcome my serpents.”

Voldemort seemed to have appeared from the shadows and Pansy and Damien didn't manage to hide their surprise.

The dark Lord was wearing black as always and faded in the wall. He walked to the altar and took the knife. “Morgain”

The girl strode arrogantly to him.

“Hand me your arm.”

She complied.

Without a flinch she watched as he slashed her flesh, letting her blood flow. He dipped one finger in it, drawing runes on both their skins, before cutting lightly his own palm and pressing it to the wound.

“Bind,” he ordered.

A flash of green and black tendrils shot from his wand, curling around his palm and her arms. She showed nothing but a small twitch of her eye.

For a minute, nobody moved, then Voldemort withdrew his hand.

Nothing remained of the cut, only a small black spot, like a beauty spot.

One by one, they submitted to the ritual.

Draco was the last one to go and was quite wary as he felt the dark tendrils touch his skin, chilling him to his bones. A probe invaded his mind and he felt it connect to his own core.

He frowned, it was not a simple mind link. It was bound to his magic...

Then he felt a surge of pleasure, contentment so strong he nearly laughed. But following quick was a searing pain.



He fell to his knee. This was different from the pain of the Cruciatus, he had grown used to this one, but this was directly apply to his mind.

He was left panting as the pain left. All the others were in the same state than him.

“Good, the link is working, I will continue your training when you return to Hogwarts, it will give me an hold in the school... The wards shouldn’t notice this since it’s woven in your magic.”

Draco didn’t say anything, thinking of the school...

It seemed he had been here for so long... could it be true that he was leaving soon?

He looked at Voldemort who was smiling at them.

No

He wasn’t truly leaving... He might escape for a while but it was too late for him.

They belonged to him, they were his Serpents, but first and foremost, they were His....

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Done!

Next chapter should be up in two or three weeks... more probably three, but who knows?

Thanks again to all those who reviewed.

Naia



## Chapter Twenty-Six

## When the insanity begins...

*Sirius?*

**၁၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀၀**

The black-haired man shot up from his chair and Harry found himself choked in a bone-crushing embrace. He could feel his godfather's body trembling slightly. He disentangled slowly from the arms holding him, but the calloused hand didn't relinquish their grip on his shoulders, as if afraid he would disappear again.

Sirius' face was deathly pale, mared with red streaks. His eyes were raking over Harry as if to be sure itw as indeed him.

The man had not gained weight, he had even lost some: his face was emaciated and he was wiry: muscles and bones.

“It’s really you... It really is.....”

Sirius suddenly let go of him and slumped on his chair.

"It's good to see you back and well Harry," said someone else.

Harry's head whirled to the side and a smile appeared on his face upon seeing his old DADA teacher.

## “You too, Professor”

“Remus, I’m no longer your teacher,” said the man, dismissing the title, “unless you enrolled yourself back into the school and will join my Dueling classes.”

Harry shook his head.

“I thought so...”

There was an instant of silence.



"Why did you write us you were back, Harry?" Sirius' voice was holding an accusing' tone.

Harry sighed. He knew he should have, but he didn't want to endanger them... that and he had been afraid of meeting with Sirius again, in particular after Hermione's welcome. "I didn't want to put you in danger. Owls can be tracked down easily..."

"Dumbledore could have reached us easily," cut Remus.

"At the risk of distracting you during a mission he told me was not devoid of dangers?" Harry sounded indignant.

"It would have been better than learning you were back through the Daily Prophet!" Sirius sprang to his feet.

Harry winced at the shout.

"Neither Harry or me are deaf Sirius, though if you continue like this, one of us will be..."

"But... Moony...."

"Shouting won't change the situation, the headmaster explained it to us, there was nothing Harry could have done and you know it," the werewolf replied in a calm voice, folding his arms and shooting his friend a look, as if daring him to say otherwise.

The Azkaban escapee sat back in his chair.

"He could have owled us..."

Harry frowned.

"He is standing in the room and He would like not to be talked about when he can hear it," he snapped, then sighed. "Sorry about that, but the past weeks have been stressful..."

"So we heard," said Remus. He got a serious look on his face as he eyed Harry. "How are you doing?"



Harry raked a hand in his hair.

“As well as can be expected...”

“Harry, kiddo, Dumbledore told us about those bastards, are you sure you’re alright?!”

Harry could sense the worry in his godfather’s voice.

“I’m fine Sirius, what is done is done....”

The black-haired man was back on his feet pacing.

“I’m going to have a talk with those bastards.”

Harry’s eyes widened at that.

“No, you won’t. I’ve enough problems with them as it is.”

“Harry...” Sirius’ voice held a warning tone in his voice, “I’m your godfather, it’s my job to take care of you, to protect you.”

Harry moved to the window, looking at the pitch where the Hufflepuff team was training. He wondered if Ron had taken care of his Firebolt... He had flown since he had been back and he realized he missed it somewhat.

“Harry?”

The young wizard turned towards his godfather.

“Let me take care of this, Harry. Go flying or do whatever teenagers do, and leave this to me...”

A surge of anger shot through Harry.

He appreciated the thought, but Sirius didn’t understand. None of the adults in this school seemed to understand. They wanted to preserve their innocence, to protect them from the war, but they couldn’t the war was everywhere, every hours they were reminded of the fights. They, for the majority had already lost most of their innocence, of



their care-free minds. He was not a normal teenager and most of the students in the school would never be normal teenagers.

This was a war, for god's sake! He knew this better than others did. They were trained to fight and he should forget everything and go play?

"Why don't you go prank Snape? Like your father did?" Sirius smiled conspirationnally at him.

Harry starred at Sirius.

Pranks?

Pranking Snape?

He blinked, turned and left the room, slamming the door behind him, fuming.

Sirius gawked at the trembling doorknob which was now red-hot.

"What did I say?"

Remus placed his head in his hand.

"Sirius, for once in your life, think before you open your mouth..."

"What's the problem with him Moony?"

The former DADA professor sighed.

"He's not a kid, Sirius. You can't coddle or shelter him."

"He's sixteen! He shouldn't have to do this! Did you hear what Dumbledore said he did to those chimeras! I don't want him to lose more of his youth than he already did."

The werewolf shot a look at the door.

"I think it's already too late for this, Padfoot."

Sirius let himself fall on his chair.



"I missed so much of him growing up, I mean, I'm his godfather and I know next to nothing about him! Sure I know he like flying, DADA, that he has a knack for getting into sticky situations, that he can't stand Snape or Malfoy and so forth, but everyone know this. I don't know the girl he's crushing on, what he likes to eat, what is his favorite color... I don't want to miss more of his life."

"It's not me you should be telling this," cut Remus.

"He was not listenning to me."

"Because you were treating him like a Kian."

The two young men turned towards the door and faced a aged and strange-looking man.

He was quite tall, with pale skin, light purple hair tied on the nape of his neck, a small beard and piercing ocean blue eyes. His mouth was set in a small scowl. He stepped in the room, closing the door behind him. He was clothed as usual in blue, this time a purplish kind of blue.

"Who are you?" snapped Sirius.

The old man sighed.

"I'm Helion, Water Elemental Adept, currently helping your research teams with other scholars from our world."

Remus' eyes narrowed.

"You are one of them."

Helion met his eyes.

"If you mean, moonchild, that I'm a member of the Headquarters, then you're mistaken. I did not meet the Athar until his arrival at the King's court."

Remus calmed down slightly.

"What did you mean by Kian?" asked Sirius, a bit annoyed at the man's behavior.



“I believe you can translate it to kid in your tongue. The Athar stopped being one the moment he entered the Headquarters. You can’t expect him to forego everything he fought to gain. He is the Athar, a fighter, a judge and a master, something your kind seem to have a hard time to understand, despite what happened a week ago...”

The two men frowned.

“In our world, children are considered adults when they reached an age limit, therefore for our laws, Harry is still a teenager,” countered Remus.

The Elemental shook his head.

“Then you’ll lose him. No child would have survived what he went through.”

This deepened the frown on their faces.

“What did he go through?”

Helion didn't answer them.

“This is not my story to tell.”

He smoothed his robes and made his way towards the exit.

Sirius and Remus looked at each other, before looking at the door, but their muttering was clearly audible.

## “Dumbledore”

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Harry went straight to the paddock and looked for Shadow.

"I do hope you're not going to ride now..."

Harry turned, ready to curse the next person who told him what he was or was not supposed to do.



He was nearly tempted to do so when he spotted Lienhor perched on the fence.

“What would it do if I was?” he snarled.

Lienhor turned to him with a blank face.

“You earned some respect from me Athar, don’t make me regret it...”

Harry leaned on the fence taking deep breath... Could they not leave him alone, without any kind of expectations weighting on him!

A warm, furry something nuzzled his neck, tickling him.

With a smile, he looked up and pat his horse’s head, aware of Lienhor’s scrutiny.

“You do have a gift with animals. That could explain why you could ride him when none of us could... No horse would have approached you otherwise, given your state of mind...”

Harry turned to the Riding master, meeting his eyes.

This was the highest praise the elf had ever given him.

“They are... soothing... They don’t expect anything of you...” he muttered.

Lienhor just nodded before reporting his gaze to the horses. Harry noticed he was looking more intently at a chestnut mare.

“She’s going to have her foal sooner than I expected... I took her here because every foals she delivered died at birth... She’s always trashing and extremely aggressive during the delivrance. We can’t use calming spells or potions, nor are we quick enough to take the foal away...”

Harry kept silent.

“I’d like you to assist me. You obviously have a gift and none of my usual aids are here...”



Harry's mouth opened in shock.

Lienhor turned to him.

"This doesn't mean anything, Athar. I need help and you're the best one to provide it..."

Harry looked back at the mare, but was startled by a gentle shove against his hand which had stopped stroking Shadow's head and neck.

"Send for me when the time will have come..."

With that, he jumped over the fence and on his stallion's bare back. Sensing his rider's weight, his mount went off at full speed towards the other end of the paddock.

Riding without bridle or saddle, Harry just clung to the mane, leaning forwards, following Shadow's movements and enjoying their race against the wind.

After awhile, the stallion slowed down to a more comfortable pace. Harry was about to make him slow even more when he felt something hot against his chest.

Frowning, he glanced down, and would have banged his head on the nearest wall, had there been one nearby.

The flame of Sardogh!

Terio was going to skin him alive... he had not called him once for the past two months!

Straightening himself, he signalled to his horse to get back to walking as he activated the medallion, readying himself for the dwarf's dressing down.

"Harry I don't know who! You better have a good reason for not calling me once!"



Shadow, startled by the shout, made a sudden move on the right, and Harry, not expecting it, lost his balance and found himself laying on his back, in the grass.

"I'm not deaf, Terio. Nice to hear from you."

A grumble was heard.

"Good to hear you too, young wizard, even if it has been a long time, but I suppose you can be excused... How are you?"

Harry sighed, why was he always asked if he was fine?!...

"As good as can be expected," he answered, deciding to stay where he was, not feeling like standing up. He was going to have a nice bruise from that fall.

"Not that good then. And the leaf-eater?"

"Teneb was fine last time I saw him, he was called back to Horevald a week ago."

"I expected it... Nasty business going on there... I wouldn't be surprised if you were called back too... From the way things are going, this Celen fellow and his mother will have nice little civil war on their hands... and from what I heard, some idiots managed to get their hands on some power stones and have started playing with it."

Harry's blood froze.

Power stones... No they wouldn't dare to... He dismissed those thoughts. They knew the possible consequences of dabbling with these kinds of energies.

"It probably won't come to that... The situation would have to be really screwed up for them to call for me. And I already have a war on my hands."

There was a pause.

"So my cousins told me."



Harry was puzzled at this.

“How?...”

The deep throaty laugh of the dwarf was heard through the flame.

“You don’t think we would limit ourself to the lands of those tree-lovers?” Another burst of laughter. “Of course not! Some communities are living in your world too... and we like to keep tabs on both worlds.”

Harry nodded though Terio couldn’t see it.

“That’s good to know... By the way how are things going for you?”

“Quite good, though our council is gathering due to a visit we had a few days ago, which is why I’m calling you.”

“Really? Why?”

There was a silence, then Terio spoke up again.

“We, dwarves are diggers, craftsmen and trade-people. Even if the elves look down on our products, other races don’t have those problems. Vampires in particular favor our blades...”

“Vampires?” blurted out Harry.

“Yes,” there was no mistaking the snappish edge in the dwarf’s voice, “We received a group of emissaries who met with several council members for hours. Once they left, our forges and mines received the biggest request for weapons and metals they ever got, even during our past wars.”

“Are the Vampires entering the war?”

Harry’s heart squeezed a bit with fear.

Some Vampires had already sided with Voldemort, young ones, most of them being under a century-old. But since Beauxbatons’ destruction, they had not been seen.



If they were to side as a whole with the Dark Lord, this would bring whole new lot of problems: if the younger ones would not pose too much of a threat, those older or the ancients would be a real menace to their side: they knew magics long forgotten, and had powers and abilities that could not be compared to those of mortals.

"I'm not sure if they have already decided... I heard there were purges among their numbers, but no more than that."

Harry started to feel the first signs of a full-blown headache appearing and closed his eyes, willing his problems away, not that it worked...

"Great... Just what we needed, why are you telling me this?"

"They were interested by the name of the one who had taken a particular set of blades..."

"Don't say more... I bet that's mine."

"Got it in one. I don't know if I told you but their maker was apprenticed to a vampire and learnt weapon crafting from him, that's why his work is so peculiar..."

"And they are coming here?" asked Harry.

"I think they will they seemed to recognize you from the description we gave them..."

Harry sighed.

"I better tell the headmaster to expect visitors."

He opened his eyes slowly and nearly had a heart attack as he was met with three pale faces looking down at him.

He was on his feet instantly and had his hand raised, a ball of fire gathering in his palm and growing. The three figure took some steps back, but remained calm, though two of them had dark balls of light crackling in their hands.



Harry eyed them warily. They were powerful, very powerful. He could nearly feel the power around them, but that was probably because they had flared their auras. Two of them had pale skin while the other one was dark-skinned. The two gathering magic were standing a step in front of the third one.

The latter had graying black hair, fair skin and incredible green eyes which seemed to be alive with flames and pierce through you. He was dressed in Shakespearian era clothes, mostly black. His two companions wore clothes more like those of the elves: black pants, a long sleeved tunic, boots and an outer robe.

They wore little color. The one on the left was built like an ox, with big muscle visible through the clothes. With short brown hair and brown eyes, he look like the saying all brawn and no brain could apply to him, if you dismissed the obvious intelligent and perceptive glint in his eyes. His friend had the ideal-built for a thief: slender, not too tall with long limbs. His dark skin contrasted with his bleached, spiked hair. His black eyes did not leave Harry's.

"Harry? Harry? What is happening?"

"Terio?" Harry paused slightly, not breaking eye contact with the newcomers, "Could you describe those emissaries to me?"

There was a moment of silence.

"You don't.... Knowing you, you must mean what I think you mean. They were four. Two Shadow Adepts, a mountain of muscles and a thief-like, a Hallow walker, a creepy one dressed in black from head to toes and the one in charge, a snob-like guy."

Harry frowned. They were only three of them... so was this Hallow walker around or did he not come?

His answer came to him as the sound of a blade swishing through the air on his side.

He rolled away, unsheathing his own sword, as he had taken to wear it most of the time, powering it immediately. He could see him now. A



tall thin figure draped in all black who was lunging at him, a double edge sword coming straight to his neck.

Dropping in a defensive stance, he raised his own sword, centering himself. The following seconds were a succession of blows and Harry found himself, the blade resting against his throat, but he smirked. His own was also pressing lightly against his opponent's neck.

"HARRY!"

"Sorry Terio, they seemed to have wanted a demonstration of what the sword could do, though they could have asked..."

"Vampires.... What else can you expect from them? I'll leave you then... But you know, you do have strange relations: leaf-eaters, blood-suckers... What will it be next?"

"You tell me... Take care, Terio."

"You too, and say hello to Adrien, the snob one."

The flame went back in the medallion which closed itself with a snap sound. Harry shot a look at the other three vampires. The two adepts had banished their magic balls and he could see the one Terio had called Adrien was amused from the slight quirk of the lips.

Harry dropped his sword, imitated by his opponent, nodding to him. Casting a quick sharpening and cleaning charm on the blade, he sheathed it.

"I'll have to have a talk with this dwarf..." muttered the vampire, before looking at Harry. "So you're the Boy-who-lived," Adrien's voice was articulate and melodic. "Sorry, but we had to be sure. Maximilien and Optah couldn't pierce your shields unnoticed."

Harry was secretly glad to know this. If Vampires couldn't pass them, there was little risk someone else would be able to do it.

"No harm done... I assume you want to see the headmaster?"

Adrien nodded.



“We request an audience with your leader, that indeed is true, but we’d like to talk to you... in private if it is possible.”

Harry frowned a bit but agreed nonetheless, his curiosity getting the better of him.

They walked to the castle and the young wizard guided them to Dumbledore’s office, and showed them in. They had attracted quite a lot of attention on their way and by then, he was sure the older man had heard about it.

He went to the West tower and sat up there for the rest of the day, spelling the door to stay closed. People rarely came here as you had to climb a rotting, narrow flight of stairs, not to mention the two ghouls living in this staircase: two crazy and annoying spirits which were always laughing hysterically when they weren’t cracking stupid jokes.... They called themselves TimTom and TomTim.

Harry had never tried to ask if those were their real names and had long learned to avoid them, having come here quite often during the past two months. The top of the tower was made of a unique circular room with large windows.

He had been using it to practice his Animagus transformations, after putting up several warding and concealing wards. Teneb and him had managed their feline transformation, as well as their two birds forms. They had started on their Dragon ones, but they had made small progress.

Teneb being absent, Harry had been focusing on his fourth form: the phoenix one.

For now he had managed to get some feather, a beak and two tail feathers and to his relief it was looking like he would be a “normal” phoenix.

He hoped he would not have green eyes this time. So far, all of his forms had had more or less green eyes: a blazing green streaked with gold for the snow leopard, a dark deep green for the raven... neither did he get rid of his scar. But he wasn’t going to complain in both cases, the mark was hidden enough not to be too obvious.



He started his usual meditating exercises, closing his eyes and deepening his breathing....

He was startled as he felt his wards being triggered.

A thrilling sound came out of his throat instead of a squeak and he conjured a mirror.

He had the beak and the wings. The patch of feathers had even grown and were covering half of his body, and his wing. Turning, he noticed three long tail feathers coming out of his pants. Glancing down, he saw that his feet were definitively scaly and more pointed than usual.

He tried to smile, but beaks weren't designed to express human emotions.

He felt his inner wards shift forcefully but did not move. This gave him the identities of the trespassers. No human, Elfish, Magis or Elemental magics would have been able to pierce his wards. That left Dwarves and Vampires.

"Impressive... I didn't think it possible to have such a form..."

In a matter of seconds, he was human again and checked to be sure he had not missed something and misplaced some body parts.

Harry then turned to the four Vampires standing the room.

"Neither did I."

Adrien smiled lightly.

"Nice wards, Optah had troubles going through them... But I should present my companions and myself. Maximilien," he pointed to the burly one, "and Optah," the thief-like vampire bowed his head, "are Shadow Adepts, Hien-Na is a Hallow Walker." The figure in black lowered her hood and Harry eyed the one who had tried to off him earlier.



He wasn't very tall and thin. His features were definitively Asiatic with shoulder-long, straight black hair framing his face and almond shaped dark brown eyes.

The Vampire joined his hand and saluted.

The young Athar mimicked his movements and was rewarded with a pleased expression on the vampire's face.

"This was a good sparring. However you should strengthen your left side. You started to learn the Dance, didn't you?" This was more of an affirmation than a question.

Nodding, Harry thanked him for the advice, although it was nothing he didn't already know.

"I am Adrien."

Harry waited for more.

"I'm one of the Ancients and as you probaby guessed we came to see if an alliance between our races would be possible and profitable."

The black-haired wizard remained silent. Would the man get to the point?

"I will do so soon."

Harry sent him a cold look and tightened his barrier, closing his mind completely.

"Kindly stay out of my mind."

The vampire smiled, uncovering his fangs. But if had been waiting for a reaction, he was disappointed.

"Your guardian trained you well," stated Maximilien. Seeing Harry's surprise, he sent him a feral smile. "Don't be surprised Athar, we have spies everywhere, even among the elves, no matter how much they'd like to deny it."



“However, the majority of your people is not as... stoic, as you, fortunately,” added Adrien. Harry repressed a burst of laughter at the thought. A meeting of the Order had to have been called and they must have showed their fang. He imagined the faces of some of those present then... Must have been hilarious...

“It was,” said Hien-Na, a small smirk on his face. “And I didn’t need to read your mind to know what you were thinking...”

Harry was about to protest this, but Adrien cut him.

“As entertaining this talk might be, we did not come in this... tower through those stairs to speak about this.” Harry could hear the mild disgust in the Ancient’s tone. It was true that though he had cleaned the room, he had not done it thoroughly nor had he furnished it or bothered with the stairs, just getting rid of the spiderwebs after several encounters with their occupants and being stung a few times. The last one had triggered an allergic reaction on his part and the next day the spiders were gently relocated to another part of the castle thanks to a handy little charm.

Therefore the room was bare, there were stains on the walls and floor which had been far too old to go away with simple cleaning charms, dents and creaks in the stones. However he had repaired all the windows since there tended to have a lot of wind lately.

“Sorry, if this is not up to your standard, but it fits its purposes...”

“I imagine it does. We ask to see you to know if the Dragons were going to get involved in this war.”

Harry thought carefully about it.

“I don’t know. How did your meeting with the Headmaster go?”

Adrien smiled coldly.

“As I expected it would go. Is there a way for you to learn what the Dragons may do?”

“Don’t you have a spy among them?”



Maximilien laughed sharply at this.

“Good one... No, we don't, but not for lack of trying on our part, somehow they always manage to spot us...”

Harry thought for a moment then motioned towards the window.

“Meet me by the Forbidden Forest.”

That said he shifted to his raven form and flew out.

He had flown a bit as a bird and every time was overjoyed by the feeling of being in the air, being free of everything. He seemed to leave his worries on the grounds.

He landed on the edge of the forest, waiting for the visitors to appear. The night had fallen and no clouds were hiding the stars. Mars was glowing brightly. He smiled at the thought of what the centaurs would say.

“Mars is bright tonight.”

He whirled on his heel and saw the four Vampires standing before him. There in the darkness, they took a more sinister appearance, and Harry could easily believe why there were so many horror stories about them. It was their home, they were made for Darkness.

“It sure is, but I don't think you'd enjoy all the interpretation the Divination teacher of this school could give you of this phenomenon.”

“Then why ask us to come here?”

“To have you meet someone who will answer your question.”

He concentrated on his bond, as Rexeran had shown him some times ago and seconds later he felt the answer as a warm feeling spread through his body, bringing a true smile on his face.

Adrien took a few steps back.

“He's calling his bonded.”



A fearful expression passed on Optah's features, and they all took a few more steps backwards.

A Golden light appeared in the Dark, growing bigger and bigger until Rexeran was standing in front of them. Harry walked to him and pressed his head against the scales of the dragon.

Why did you call me, Astyan? The question was asked mentally.

They need to ask you something, replied Harry, pointing to the vampires with his chin.

Rexeran moved his head towards them.

Adrien, it's been a long time...

"A long time indeed, Rexeran," replied the Ancient, hesitation audible in his voice. His eyes were darting from Harry to the Sowaroc, something akin to dawning awe appearing in them.

Harry's narrowed.

"You two know each other?"

Rexeran gave him the draconian equivalent of a smile.

You could say that, me and Adrien go a way back..., don't we?

Optah made a little strangled noise.

Rexeran's attention shifted to the slender Adept.

Optah, how marvellous... You gathered quite the team, Adrien: Optah, Maximilien, glad to see you're fine, and Hien-Na... What are you up to?

The question was asked a little harshly.

"Rexeran?"

It's nothing you need to worry about Harry, this is a story best saved for later.



“If you say so, Rexeran, they asked to know if the Dragons would involved themselves in this war.”

Rexeran pierced Adrien with his rainbow eyes.

The Dragons will not get involved in the fight but will help on the sides. Should it turn for the worse, we will step in along side our bonded.

Adrien nodded.

“As it always should.”

There was a moment of silence.

You should go back Harry, or they will search for you, if they didn't already started to, I need to have some words with Adrien...

Harry nodded his agreement, relieved that Rexeran had told him why he had to leave. The Dragons always explained his actions to him, instead of leaving him in the dark.

I wouldn't do this, Astyan.

Harry sent him a smile before heading for the castle, saluting the vampires.

Before he was out of ear-shot, he heard a few.

“Does he know? Is he really...” Optah sounded a bit scared.

He didn't catch more than this and did not give it a lot of attention, as he tried to decide how to deal with Sirius and Remus.

And the students would be back in a week...

## Why couldn't things be normal...

[illegible]

He managed to avoid Sirius and Remus for a day, but couldn't keep on this for long. Unbeknowt to him though, the two Marauders had gone to Dumbledore who had made a few points clear.



He decided to go outside and took Lucky with him. The young fox had been wandering around the castle during the whole holidays, thus obliging most of the teachers to place wards to stop him from going in certain parts of the building: the dungeons, the classrooms, the kitchen after he raided them, the greenhouses...

Once outside, he sat on the fence closing the horses' paddock, after placing shadow saddle on it. He had noticed that one of the straps was starting to break and had decided to replace it. He could have done it magically, but he found the manual work to be fairly relaxing, as long as he was careful.

Something he was not often lately.

As he worked on taking the defective strap from the saddle, the knife slipped and he cut his left hand.

With a cry and a curse, he dropped the knife.

Cursing his stupidity, he transfigured a strand of grass in a bandage and dressed the cut, thankfully he kept a self cleaning charm on the blade and did not need to worry about infection immediately. Not wanting to lose time, he jumped to the floor and went back to work. An hour later, the saddle was repaired and after checking on the little fox who was chasing butterflies near Hagrid's hut, he headed for the dungeons, having a session with Snape.

He had no sooner stepped in the man's room, after drinking his potion that he found himself pinned to the wall by a murderous glare.

Before he could move, Snape had grabbed his left arm and undressed his cut, looking at it with suspicious eyes.

"Tell me you did not do it on purpose, you idiot."

His voice was calm.

Harry yanked his arm back.

"I did not, my knife slipped while I was working on something."



“Your knife slipped...” There was no mistaking the unbelieving tone in his professor voice. That, added to his sneer angered Harry.

He really had enough of this crap! He wasn't even a student here anymore!

“Yes! But it's just a small cut, I was going to heal it tonight!”

“P-Boy, in cases like yours, accidents like this rarely happen by chance.”

Harry gaped at the serious face of his professor.

“You think I did it consciously?!”

Snape sneered.

“Maybe not, but you probably wanted to do it subconsciously....”

“I'm not suicidal!” Harry winced at the high-pitched voice. Of all the students, couldn't have Snape chosen someone with a deeper voice.

“You were suicidal enough to do this to yourself!” Snape snapped back, pointing to Harry's wrist.

Harry couldn't deny it, but he wasn't about to agree to the idea he was self-destructive.

“That was nearly a year ago. I wouldn't do it anymore, I am not even able too! Not that I need it, I'm not alone anymore!”

Snape frowned and crossed his arms.

“Give me only one reason why I shouldn't take away all objects remotely sharp from you, it would spare me the trouble. I've got better things to do than catering to students who thinks they can play with their life.”

Harry looked down at his hands, trying to keep his temper in check.

“Things are different from then... I'm not alone, I've got my bond, and this...”



He showed the man the scar from the blood brother ritual, not thinking the Potion teacher would recognize it.

Taking the hands as he would an ingredient, the spy examined the scar.

"I see, and I guess that the elf who was always stuck to your hip sports its twin."

A small widening of his eyes was the only sign of Harry's surprise, but Snape didn't see it, busy looking at the other scars marring Harry's arm.

He traced the one caused by Garth and his friend.

"What about this one, it should be healed by now..."

Harry barely repressed a shudder as the finger followed the cut.

"What do you think would happen, professor if you cut the tendons of someone after feeding him the Dolorais Venom and the Finite Draught?" Harry said, defiantly.

The finger stopped moving before withdrawing.

"I see. Clearly, your fame did not follow you. Must have been strange for you..."

Quickly he walked to a cupboard, not the one where he stored his ingredients, but another one, more hidden. Rumaging through racks of vials, he took out a small one filled with a brown liquid.

"Drink this. It should eliminate all the toxins left by the Dolorais in your tissues."

Puzzled by this act of kindness from his teacher, Harry uncorked the vial and brought it to his mouth. Upon smelling the contents of the vial, he rethought this kindness as he fought against the urge to throw up.

He drowned it in one gulp, but not quickly enough to avoid tasting the mixture.



“It should take three hours to take effect. If you feel any discomfort, go straight to the infirmary, I’ll warn Pomfrey of this.”

He looked at Harry, his face blank.

## “Wand out”

This was the only warning Harry got before his teacher started to throw hex after hex at him.

Snape never changed.

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The week went quickly: Harry spent most of his time down in the Chambers of Secrets, training.

The only highlight was the birth of a small bay foal. Between them, Harry and Lienhor had managed to save him. The young creature was still weak, but it would live. Lienhor had thanked him for his help and since then often met with Harry at dawn when he exercised his stallion. They didn't talk much, but that was OK with Harry. Besides this, he did nothing but train, however, if he was truthful with himself, he would admit, that he did it more to avoid seeing Sirius than for the extra-training.

He didn't how to act anymore, towards Sirius, his former professors...

He had talked to Teneb about this when the elf had pointed out this particular behaviour...

“I don’t understand Harry! Why are you so... so compliant to them! You’re not a student anymore!”

He had sighed

"Because it's easier this way Teneb..."

The elf's face had darkened even more.

“Don’t give this kind of shit, Harry! No when I see how much it’s getting to you to do so!”



“Teneb...”

“No! I don’t understand why you’re letting them treat you like a kid! You are not, you have been trained, you swore an oath, Harry! You can’t backed down and act as if the past didn’t happen!”

“It’s easier said than done! They don’t know what happened to me. They know little bits, true, but not like you do! They wouldn’t understand if I was to act differently than I did before I left. They would be thinking I’m going dark, they would ...”

“...reject you?” had cut Teneb, “Because that’s what you’re most scared of Harry?... To be discarded...”

“Teneb,” Harry’s voice had held an annoyed tint.

“NO!”

The elf had been definitively riled up.

“I’ve not known you for as long as they did, but I sent everything to hell when I decided to befriend you and when I followed through with the brotherhood ritual. I care for you Harry, you are my brother, not the Athar or the Boy-who-lived or whatever stupid name they might give you! My family accepted you, Celen did! If they can’t accept you for what you are, then they don’t deserve you! You are powerful; you are not an average wizard who will live an anonymous and peaceful life! Accept it once for all and use your power to make things better!”

“That’s words Teneb, reality is not that simple.”

“Even now! Listen to yourself!” Teneb’s voice had calmed down a bit. “Why can’t you accept your gifts and use them? It won’t make you dark to do so...”

“It’s just... that I’m... scared of what I could do...”

“Scared of what?”

“Of becoming like Him”



Teneb hadn't had to ask who He was.

"And do you think Voldemort would care about others or think of the harm he could do?"

Harry had shaken his head.

"Then you have your answer..."

Harry hadn't been really convinced and still wasn't, but his patience was drawing thin. His stay at the Headquarters and Teneb's company had taught him something he had never thought of before.

Pride.

This was a double-edge sword as he was finding out.

At first he had welcomed and even wanted things to go back to the way they were. Professor Dumbledore would know what to do, Snape would belittle him, McGonagall would be her overbearing self... But they were choking him, trying to make him fit their picture of what he should be: a boy.

He wasn't, hadn't been a boy for quite a time.

By the end of the week, he was cornered...

He was trying to sneak from the Chamber to his rooms. It was nearly dinner time and he had not eaten a lot at lunch, having been caught in an experiment with his element power.

"Harry! Here you are!"

The young wizard spun on his heel and faced Bill Weasley.

"We've been looking for you all week... Well, they've been looking for you," added with a sheepish smile. "As far as I'm concerned, you're entitled to your privacy."

Harry smiled at the older Weasley.



"You should make an appearance though, or they might try to tie you to your bed should they catch you..." said the curse-breaker.

"Well, they know that I go to my lessons with Snape..."

"And the git made it clear that whoever intruded on those lessons would be used as his next potion ingredient. And knowing him, he was serious."

Harry hid a smirk.

"So will you come? Or do I have to act as if I didn't see you?"

Harry shook his head.

"I will go..."

"Try being a bit more enthusiastic about it, or one could think you loath the very idea..." replied Bill, before leaving Harry.

Once sure no one was watching, he waved his hand and cleaned himself. Well, no use wasting time...

He was among the last ones to entered the hall, and he could sense eyes on him as soon as he stepped in. From the corner of his eye, he could see Sirius had stood up and had made to march to him, only to be stopped by Remus who shook his head. The former convict had looked angry, but at what, Harry did not know, probably him...

O joy!

Harry sat next to Hermione, answering by yes or no to their questions. They soon got the hint and left him alone, but not before told him that the headmaster wanting to see him after dinner.

He finished eating quickly, then telling Hermione and Ron he would meet them in the common room, he left. He felt a bit guilty about neglecting his two friends, and decided to try to see them more.

He roamed the castle for half an hour and then headed for the Headmaster's office.



He was not surprised to see Remus who clearly didn't seem to be happy, Sirius, McGonagall, Snape who was in his usual sour mood and Dumbledore waiting for him.

"Harry, come in, come in."

The young man rolled his eyes upon hearing the cheerful voice of the Headmaster.

"You wanted to see me, Professor."

The headmaster leaned forwards, clasping his hands.

"Yes, I did. The staff and I were quiet worried about you this week."

Harry's eyes narrowed.

"I did not miss my lessons with Professor Snape."

Dumbledore shook his head.

"I know that my boy," Harry barely refrained from snarling, he was not a boy! "But where were you the rest of the time?"

"In the castle, training."

Dumbledore seemed to sense that he would not say more on this.

"Good, good... Now, I wanted to know when you wanted to go to Diagon Alley to collect your books and other things you might need for the coming year..."

Harry looked at him unblinkingly.

"I fear I don't understand what you're talking about, headmaster..."

"Now, now my boy. I understand your circumstances are a bit peculiar, but you mustn't throw away your education. Sirius agreed to enroll you back, and since you missed a year of school, you'll join the fifth years..." Dumbledore trailed off, not noticing the fury making its way on Harry's face.



“You won’t have to change of dorm, Potter,” said McGonagall, apparently wanting to placate him. “you’ll be able to stay with your friends.”

There was a moment of silence and Snape who had been standing in a corner, took a few steps back, sensing the magic getting wilder and wilder.

Being the one teaching the brat, he knew first hand what he could do, or at least, whatever part of his power Potter had shown and he did not want to find himself on the other end of his wand, should he lost it.

And the headmaster was doing a great job of pushing all his buttons.

“Are you serious?” Harry’s tone was disbelieving, but with a harsh quality that only showed how close he was to snapping. “Do you really think I have nothing better to do than go to classes!”

“M. Potter!” McGonagall seemed appalled.

“What?!”

“Whatch your tone, young man,” she said. “You need to complete your education and your OWLs are important for your future...”

“That’s true, Harry, it’s for your own good. Those exams are really important, you can afford to fail them,” said Sirius.

Harry’s head whipped towards his godfather.

“You didn’t listen to anthing I told you last time... I don’t need OWLs! My future is set, that is if I still have a future once this is over.”

Sirius shook his head.

“Harry, you’re just sixteen, you can’t know that for sure. You’ll probably change your mind, and then you’ll thank us for this...” replied his godfather, before Remus could silence him.

This did it. Harry snapped.



“I AM NOT A BLOODY KID!” Blue flames shot up, forming a wild and lethal aura around him, dancing on his skin and in his eyes. “Can’t you see that! I thought you had understood it at least!” he was looking at Dumbledore, “But NO!”

The flames in his eyes seemed to freeze as his elemental aura expanded.

He was seeing red, his mind was clouded with a rage restrained for too long.

“I’m not your student anymore. I’m not the teen I was before, the one you could order him around. This one died at Christmas last year! SO stop telling me what I need to do like you know better! YOU. DON’T. KNOW!!” he yelled, enraged. The flames expanded again, forcing those in the room to back away.

The door opened with a bang and the four Elementals barged in the room, followed by Reald.

They took in the scene and the four scholars sprang in action.

“We have to subdue him before he blows up the whole building!”

The one with bright red tresses tried to call upon her own control over fire. At first it seemed to work, the flames calmed down but suddenly flared again, stronger than ever.

“Helion! He’s spiralling!”

The water Elemental’s face paled dramatically. He turned to the humans in the room.

“You fools... What have you done!” He turned to his peers. “ Full circle, Reald, you anchor us.”

The four of them surrounded the young Athar. They all raised their hands and Harry was surrounded by a Dome of swirling elements, weaved together.



Slowly, the dome got smaller and smaller. Forcing the flames to re-enter Harry's body.

Sweat was perling on the Elemental's faces. Their arms started to tremble slightly under the strain and the dome flickered.

"Reald!"

The Elf muttered a few words and light surrounded the four of them, boosting their power. The dome resumed his reduction, and soon it was surrounded Harry.

"Reald, call Teneb. We can't snap him out of this. We need his trigger!"

The elf nodded, taking a stone in his hand.

The dome flickered. As Harry started to struggle, burns forming on his skin.

"And quick before he burns himself, or breaks through the shield!"

At this Sirius sprung up.

"WHAT! What are you doing to him! Stop it! You're hurting him!"

Helion turned to the man, his ocean blue eyes blazing, but not once, did he loosened his hold on the dome, neither did his peers.

"Do you want to die?"

Sirius shook his head.

"Then stay silent for once! And think of what you did!"

Meanwhile, Reald had been talking hurriedly in the stone, using Elfish dialect. He looked up.

"Teneb will try to reach him..."



"I hope he'll do it quickly, or he might not make it, either that or he will break through..." replied Helion, eyeing the blue flames warily. "Tanita could you try to tame his element a bit?..."

The bloody-red haired woman shook her head.

"I tried, but I can't control blue fire... it's too wild for me to handle..."

A minute passed, Harry's struggles worsened, and the Elementals had to ask for another boost of power to keep him in check. The burns got bigger and deeper, his clothes started to burn.

Suddenly he blinked and the flames disappeared from his eyes. The blue flames extinguished themselves in a matter of seconds and he slumped to the floor, shivering.

"Kal, bring him to our room and place him in a restorative circle, give him the usual. Tanita, go with him, in case he flares up again."

A tall man with deep long green hair nodded and scooped Harry in his arms and left the headmaster's office. Helion and an elderly woman, called Fiona stayed behind.

Once they were sure, they turned towards the adults in the room.

"Are you plain suicidal or complete idiots!" roared Helion.

"Helion..."

"Fiona, they were warned several times, the rider died and they persisted in their behavior!"

A cleared throat made them report their attention of the humans in the room.

"What did we exactly do?" said Sirius, clueless.

Helion looked as if he was about to snap his neck, while Fiona sneered.

"Are all humans that thick, or are you the exception?"



Sirius reddened.

"I told you to stop treating him like a Kian!"

“M. Potter is a student and will be treated as such. No special treatment!.”

Snape snorted at that while Fiona snarled.

“Open your eyes, you idiot! He is no longer your student, he hasn’t been since he returned!”

Helion nodded.

“We’ll stop helping with the research to teach him some more control. Fire gifted are more volatile by nature... And we’ll remain at the school to teach those with Elemental gifts, even if just to prevent accidents like this one happening again.”

They didn't wait for an answer and swept out of the room, leaving gaping adults behind them. Only Dumbledore was looking undisturbed. You could even see a small twinkle in his eyes as he watched the retreating Elementals.

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Harry woke up the next day around midday, with the worse headache he ever had. Moreover his whole body was aching.

He shifted, and couldn't suppress a groan as his movement made pain shot from every parts of his body in contact with whatever he was laying on.

“Don’t move. You’re in enough pain without adding to it,” he couldn’t replace the voice.

His head was held up and he felt a cup being brought to his lips.

“Drink this.”



Harry opened his eyes, seeing only blurry forms before closing them again, not used to the light. He tried to scoot away, not about to drink an unknown liquid.

Harry, trust me, you can and need to drink this, said his guardian, sensing his discomfort.

Arxeren?...

Yes, you know, you really should stop doing this... I swear, you must have fried any remaining brain cells you still had...

Not my fault.

Perhaps, however you're damn lucky that Teneb managed to reach you, or we would have had a big display of fireworks.

I'm sorry...

Don't be, I expected you to blow up soon, anyway; not in those proportions, but I knew it. If this is someone's fault, this is their fault.

Harry didn't try to defend his professors, or his godfather, knowing it was pointless. Arxeren had made his mind and would not change his point of view.

I'll leave you for now. Teneb tells me to tell you to get a grip on yourself and assume what you are, and I agree with him.

If you say so...

Of course I say so!

A tug at his chin made him realize he still had to drink whatever was in the cup.

Slowly he opened his mouth and felt a cool liquid run down his throat. Refraining from coughing, he swallowed it, relieved it was tasteless.

A few minutes later, he felt good enough to try to sit up again and opened his eyes.



He was in the scholars' quarters and on a bed. Frowning he looked around and noticed five stone floating in the air, surrounding the bed.

They had placed him in a restorative and restrictive field.

Memories came back to him and he shivered. He had been really close to lose it completely... much too close for him

"Athar?"

The Elemental's voice startled him out of his reverie.

"Yes?"

"How are you feeling?"

The tone was neutral and business like. Harry assessed his condition. He was sore, but that was to be expected, but besides that, not much. That was strange, he didn't remember it hurting that much the last time he had lost control...

"We had to subdue you through a dome, since we couldn't just hold off your power. The burns will have disappeared in a few hours."

Nodding, Harry looked at his bandaged body. He looked like a mummy.

"The bandages will be taken off in an hour," added the Fire Elemental... Tani-something.

"Thank you for stopping me."

Sh shrugged.

"We weren't about to leave you blast us all to pieces. But you are going to spend the coming days working with me. You have a good control, but you aren't able to pool and anchor your powers correctly. My name is Tanita."

The Earth Elemental was eyeing him.



"I really don't understand how your body can hold so much power... But this is a fact, just as the fact that quite a few Kian and adults residing here are gifted."

He paused for a minute.

"It was decided by our council, the mighty Afiwea that we would remain in there to grant your race our teaching on how to control these powers. Your Headmaster agreed to open a special class for this, compulsory to all of those still holding the ability."

Harry looked puzzled.

"Still holding?"

Tanita nodded, while checking one of the stone floating.

"Yes, your race seems to repressed the gift to prevent the mind from going crazy, thus blocking completely the ability. The gift is being transmitted to their offsprings though..."

Harry stayed silent then spoke up.

"Thank you."

Kal looked at him with blank eyes.

"We're not doing it for you or your people, Athar. We just don't want untrained gifted roaming this castle..."

Nodding, the young wizard leaned on the pillow behind him.

"Your Headmaster told us that an... house elf would come and bring you to your rooms as soon as you were awake."

As if hearing the words, a small pop was heard and one of the small creatures scurried to Harry's bed. It wasn't Dobby, something Harry was somewhat grateful for. The former Malfoy's servant would have been a bit distraught by his current state.

"Oly will bring Harry Potter to his rooms. Harry Potter must not fight Oly's magic."



Harry only smiled.

“I’ll see you tomorrow Athar,” said Tanita.

Harry had just time to voice his agreement before being whisked away.

He landed on his bed and looked at the calendar stuck to the wall. The students would be there in the evening, since today was Sunday, it left him a few hours to rest a bit.

He let himself sink in his bed, finding himself quite drowsy. He was about to fall asleep, for once quite relaxed when a knock was heard on his door. Turning over, his back facing the door, he put his pillow on his ear, trying to block it.

However the knocking didn’t stop and even got more insistent.

With a string of curses, he turned over again and with a wave of his hand opened the door. He was not going to stand up!

Footsteps were heard and the door of his bedroom creaked open.

“I’m here,” Harry snapped, not worrying about hurting someone’s feeling. He was sore, he was tired, and he wanted to sleep.

The door opened a bit more and Hermione and Ron entered.

They looked around and spotting two chairs brought them next to Harry’s bed.

“Nice costume Harry,” finally said Ron, eyeing the bandage with a slightly concerned look.

“I’ll lend it to you, if you want it.”

There was a moment of silence.

“Sirius told us what happened,” finally started Hermione.

Harry glared at his hands.



"We were getting worried, since you told us you would meet us in the common last night, so we went to him and Remus..." she elaborated.

"They told us you weren't coming back to Hogwarts," cut Ron. He paused and his features hardened. "Is it about the elf?"

Harry shook his head, looking closely at Ron.

"That's true, but Teneb has nothing to do with it."

"Then why Harry?" Hermione was agashed at hearing this. "How do you want to find a job if you don't finish your schooling?"

Ron nodded, looking a bit relieved.

"She's right, mate. I don't like it all that much, but we need it. I know you got a special training and all that, but you still need a diploma... trust me, I've been hearing about it non stop from Percy."

Harry grimaced as he sat up straighter.

"And what job would I be able to get? I can see myself filling papers: name: Harry Potter, status: dragonrider, Athar. pet: a Dragon. Hobbies: helping and saving innocents." Sarcasm was dripping from his tone.

Hermione started to twist a strand of hair.

"Harry, you won't have to play the hero anymore once this is done. Even now, we don't expect you to off Voldemort all alone! When it will be over, you'll be free to do whatever you want to do!"

Harry gave a small sneering smile.

"Are you that naïve, Hermione? I will never be free, Hermione. I'm bound by an oath to protect and help innocents. This is what Riders are bound to do. Not that I'd want to exchange Rexeran for anything else. Do you know what an oath entail, should I break it?"

Hermione frowned.

"I read about it"



Harry heard a distinct “not a surprise here” from Ron, but ignored it, looking at his other friend.

“Such a breaking will be followed by a punishment varying with the type of oath sworn. The stronger the oath, the worse the punishment: it ranks from a small backlash to banishment, or a complete loss of the oathbreaker’s powers, even death.”

Harry nodded.

“The oath I took was sworn on my powers and life.”

Hermione paled, so did Ron once realization dawned on him.

The red head shook his head.

“You know what Harry?”

The young Athar shook his head.

"I'm really glad not to be you..." Harry rolled his eyes, drawing a giggle from Hermione. Ron looked at both of them.

“What? That’s true!”

Harry shot a look at Hermione before both of them started laughing quietly.

For once, it seemed like everything might go alright...

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Harry was seriously rethinking this as he sat in the hall, trying to ignore McGonagall obvious stalling. At least Snape and Dumbledore were being discreet. His head of House, however, kept glancing at him, fear, uneasiness mixed with a slight awe.

He looked at his plate, playing with his fork, restless. Something was going to happen... But he couldn't put his finger on what his feeling was pointing to.



He looked around the Hall: Most of the students who had stayed at the castle during the holidays were seated. His eyes swept over the tables, nodding to the people he caught eye with.

Half of them were in the Junior Order, either as trainees, or full members. There were different groupd among the Order and people were assign to one depending on their skills and motives: Research, Healing, Coordination, Supply, Communication, Fighting... The latter one was the main group, Only those in Sixth Year and above could be full members of this particular one. Before, they were trained but did not participate to any missions... not that the full members did.

“Alright Harry?”

Hermione was giving him strange looks

“Yes... it’s nothing...” he put his fork down, wishing for the Express to arrive so he ocould go to sleep.

He had taken off the bandage and whatever the Elemental scholars had used had done miracles. There only was some red patches to account for the day before events.

She opened her mouth to say something, but whatever it was, Harry would never know as the doors burst open and a ragged Aurors all but ran to the Headmaster.

Harry froze, this scene was much too familiar to the last time something like this had happened. But he would be damned if he remained on the sides again.

Dumbledore stood up and looked at the assembled students. He was loathing the very idea of what he was about to do, but he didn’t have any other choice.

“Students, go back to your common. Junior Phoenixes, those above Sixth Year part of the Healer and Fighter unit are to stay here, the others will be asked to look after their peers.”



Some gasps were heard as what was happening dawned on the students, but to their credit there was no panic. A minute later, only those allowed to were still in the Hall.

“Juniors, Gringotts is under attack from the Dark Lord. I want a unit to remain on Hogwarts’ grounds and look after the borders and the wards. At the first signs of an attack, warn us. The rest of you will come with us to Diagon Alley. Once there, I want you to split in groups of four: one healer for three fighters and evacuate the Alley. You are not, I repeat, are not to get involved in the fights, unless the situation call for it.”

They all nodded, sporting grim, but determined faces. Harry didn’t missed the pride in their eyes too. He just hoped all of them would live to tell the tale...

Taking out his wand he quickly transfigured his robes to a more appropriate set of clothes. Dark brown pants, a long sleeved tunic. No cloack or heavy jacket, those would only hinder him. He quickly checked the straps holding his weapons and his belt. Looking up, he met the Headmaster’s eyes, as well as the Masters’. With a dark smile, he raised his hand and was gone in a swirl of blue flames.

He reappeared in front of the Wizing bank.

People were running thorough the street, trying to enter the shops, crying for help as Death Eaters, Trolls and other Dark Creatures, such as Chimeras, Quintaped, Basilisks and other Harry didn’t take time to identify roamed the street, killing, cursing.

The Alley had been reopened earlier as Voldemort had been laying low.

Hearing several pops behind him, he knew the others had arrived.

He saw more Death Eaters enter the bank. How had they managed to bring down the wards, he did want to know. Goblin magic was strong and wards that ancient shouldn’t have fallen that easily.

Jogging, sending some curse to clear his path, making sure to had a binding curse each time, he stepped in the bank. The floor was littered



with Goblin and human bodies. A thick greenish mist was fading as Harry surveyed the scene. Aurors were fighting Death Eaters, sending whatever was on the counters flying in the air. Gems, gold, silver, coins were spilled on the grounds. He did not see one Goblin fighting.

Suddenly he sensed someone coming behind him and unsheathed one dagger.

A cry of Avada Kedavra was uttered, but Harry was not there to see if the curse had been dead on or not. He rolled on his side, landing on his feet, dagger in hand. A Death Eater was standing, grinning like a loon.

"You came to play, pretty boy? Justus will show you how a man can play..." he said, a hungry look in his eyes as he raked Harry's body. "Pretty, pretty boy..."

Harry shuddered at the lust-filled voice. He dodged a quite nasty hex, sending one of his own.

"Stop moving, doll, Justus will take care of you!"

Harry just raised his wand and cast a pain curse.

Justus ducked it, but couldn't avoid the insensitive curse Harry sent just behind his first one.

It hit him in the shoulder.

The man blinked, once, twice then growled, lunging towards the spot Harry had been seconds before. He did not see or heard the wizard walk to him and take up a small dart.

"Nice dreams," said Harry, as he plunged the sting in his neck, with quite a bit more force than necessary. But he remembered his visions of this man.... Justus... he liked playing with his victims and the younger they were the more pleasure he derived from it.



He replaced the dart on his belt. Teneb had been the one to suggest this one: a nightmare potion... Justus fell to the ground, snoring five seconds later.

Dismissing it, Harry went back to the fighting, but the Aurors, backed by the Unspeakables, the WVF and the Phoenixes were gaining the upper hand.

Harry headed for the cart and hopped in one, placing his hand on the controls. For a moment he fought with the magic forbidding a non-Goblin to use them and finally won. With a thought he sent it moving, deciding to make a tour of the bank's vaults. Death eaters and light side soldiers were fighting on the tracks, dodging the carts coming and leaving as they battled. As he passed them, he sent several curses of his own, disabling some before ducking when they started to retaliate. The cart was as fast as usual and Harry sensed them going deeper and deeper. People were still fighting, but still no Goblins.

Harry frowned. Where were they? And for what it meant, why wasn't there more Death Eaters?

The cart went deeper in and deeper. Suddenly a roar shook the stones and Harry stopped the cart, jumping down on the platform. A large dragon, a Hungarian Horntail, as Harry immediately noticed, was defending itself against about twenty Death-Eaters.

On the side was lying its unmoving companion, which seemed to have died from the looks of it. His eyes were bleeding mass and his body covered with deep cut, the one on his neck still bleeding, creating a large pool of blood.

An anger which was not his own filled Harry as the beast cried in pain as a pain curse hit it in its right eye.

He felt strange, detached as he raised his wand and sent flying five of those who dared to hurt his babies.

He was like being an automaton, he raised his knives, and soon the deadly blades were flying through the air, miracly hitting their targets



if the pained cries were anything to get by. He shot curses after curses, doging everyone sent at him or simply reflecting it to its caster.

He blinked as he felt a sulfure, burning breath next to his face. Around him were laying the bodies of the fallen Death Eaters. Many of them were dead, tha was for sure, given the awkward angle of their neck, or the deep gash at their throats. Others were moaning in pain as they nursed a wound or tried to lift the curse placed on them.

Blood... so much blood.....

Harry felt sick but he was distracted by the sulfure scent. Looking up, he saw the Horntail eyeing him, making him feel like he was main course on the beast' agenda.

But to his surprise, it didn't attack. The horntail bowed down his head, bringing his muzzle down to Harry's face, making him a bit dizzy.

A flash of something passed through its eyes and it growled softly and Harry's breath caught in his head as he eyed the long teeth warily.

The dragon's head touched the floor then it straightened up and the beast made its way towards the depth of the bank, at a speed which was surprising comapred to its size.

Puzzled Harry looked at it when an explsion brought him back to his senses. He jumped back in his cart and was once more spiralling down.

As he got deeper and deeper, a faint chant started to echoe from every where. The language was harsh, guttural and he didn't recognized it. He nonetheless continued, while cursing every white mask he met on his way down.

Finally he reached a large platform and realized why no Goblins had been seen.

Professor Binns had mentionned it during one of his lessons about Goblin wars and Arxeren and Terio had explained it to him while



talking about a gruesome conflict between the Dwarves and the Goblins.

The Goblin magic was exceptionnaly strong and stable, but it was a slow form of magic which needed long and tricky rituals to be used.

The Goblin rarely used it, but there one ritual they were more prone to perform than others. This particular chant was one which prevent anyone within the area covered by it from using anykind of powers, besides those physical.

Goblins had been fierce warriors in the Old Days, but now, they had settled done... Or so they were thought to... Harry winced as he saw a Goblin twist the arm of a Death Eaters behind his back until a sickening snap was heard. There seemed to be a group of ten or so Goblins, old ones gathered in a circle and chanting. Forty others were protecting them.

But as much as they might tried, they could not keep the curse at bay all the time, as the bodies littering the platform was proof of.

Harry looked at the Death Eaters. They were a lot of them but one of them was not wearing the customary white mask, but was dressed similary to Harry, completely in a dark grey color. His hood was raised, hiding his features. He wasn't using spells, or so it seemed. Harry watched the figure transfixed as he slashed throught the Goblin ranks.

A flash of light shot out of the tip of his sword and a Goblin fell down, twitching and screaming before ceasing all movements, like a puppet whose strings had all been cut.

Harry took several steps forwards, unsheating his sword, but keeping it down. Something about the dark-fighter was repulsing him. He saw him swing his swords a few more times, disarming the goblin which had tried to stop him. The weapon beheaded the creature, cutting in his flesh as easily as it would have done through butter.

Harry started to power his sword, his eyes moving around the room, surveying the growing chaos as Aurors started to arrive.



Somehow the fighter seemed to sense it. The hood was still raised, but Harry was feeling eyes on him. A small laugh came from the darkness which was his or her face as he or she walked to Harry stopping a few meters in front of him.

“Come to fight? Kid, do you know at least how to use this?”  
Definitively a male voice.

Refusing to raise to the bait, Harry pointed his sword to his right side before raising to his eyes and bowing. The other male mimicked his action and soon they both started to circle each other. Harry was centering himself, sharpening his mind and reflexes while observing his opponent. He moved gracefully, like a cat, making nearly no sound.

“Too bad for you, Kid, See you in Hell!”

The figure took a few steps forwards and spin, swinging his blade at Harry’s head. Ducking his head, Harry fell to his feet and swept at his adversary’s feet, while getting up. He brought his sword up, blocking a blow aimed at his head and pushed the man back. His opponent made a series of small steps, feinting, swinging his weapon expertly, forcing Harry to back away, until he had his back against the wall. He then aimed at Harry’s neck and lunged.

Harry had barely the time to block the blow, the blades stopping mere centimeters from his adam apple.

The hood was close to his own face and he could make out piercing blueish grey eyes.

“You’re good kid... But not good enough...”

Harry growled and pushed his back, earning a laugh from his opponent. Taking a deep breath, he recentered himself. Let’s Dance!

His opponent’s movements seemed to slow down and Harry didn’t think any longer, acting on instinct. Clashing his sword up he caught his adversary’s own blade in a hold.

“Now that’s getting more interesting...”



They backed a little and resumed circling the other. Harry was about to launch an attack when a roar was heard and three dragons: a Horntail, a Norwegian Ridgeback and a Chinese Fireball landed on the platform who immediately felt like crowded. The horntail reared and fell down on his four legs, making the whole building tremble. Harry saw creaks start to spread under his feet.

“Get away from the platform! The whole thing is crashing!”

At this everyone, Death eaters, Aurors, Unspeakables, VWF started to flee the place. The Goblins did not waver in their chant, the fighters gathered around them and one of them went to a wall and pressed a stone. Light wires shot up, encasing them in a net.

Harry felt a sharp pain in his shoulder and saw a small knife embedded there.

“Surely you’re not leaving, kian.”

Harry narrowed his eye.

“Who are you?”

A small was all he got.

“Come and find out!”

They resumed their circling once more, lunging at each other as the platform shook more and more, chunk starting to collapse.

They exchanged a few more blows until Harry felt the ground under his feet start to fall. The other sensed it too as he ran to the cart and jump in one.

Not about to let him escape without answering him, Harry immediately followed him, choosing a cart on a parallel track. Pushing some of his power in the cart to make it accelerate.

His eyes were watery, due to the wind generated by the crazy speed of their race. Getting closer to the other cart, he stood up, using his power to steady himself as much as possible.



The other did too but the wind made his hood fell and Harry couldn't repress a gasp.

He was definitively of Elfish descendance. The face was oval, though slightly pointed with a pale skin, unnatural bright almond-shaped eyes, pointed long ears. His hair fell besides his shoulder, the upper strand tied back. A small tatoo Harry couldn't see clearly was displayed on his right cheek and a small scar cut his left eyebrow.

The other gave him a mocking bow then brought his sword down towards Harry's head.

The young Athar ducked, before stricking back, aiming for the man heart. He blocked and both engaged in a dangerous fight, lunging, parrying, all the while trying to remain balanced on their moving carts.

They unexpectedly arrived to a rocky part: a succession of steep climbs up and down. Harry, used a down part to swing his sword as if willing to cut his opponent at his middle.

There wasn't enough place for the Elf look-alike to dodge, so he jumped, right in Harry's cart.

Harry pushed him back, making him lose his balance. However he managed to grasp Harry's sleeve and used his momentum to throw the younger of them above his shoulder.

Harry swore as he braced himself for a painful landing. However it didn't come. It felt himself go very light and then found himself standing on a nearby platform.

His Athar mark was glowing and throbbing, but not painfully, more in reassuringly fashion.

A puff of smoke appeared in front of him and the strange elf materialized in front of him.

He was eyeing Harry, but above looking at his mark.

"No... that is interesting... A human Kian?... Athar?"



He gave Harry an appraising look, then a feral grin.

“Much more interesting.”

He lunged at Harry in a series of cat-like movements, forcing the young wizard to back up slightly. Harry brought his sword up, getting a bit tired...

“What are you?” he said, managing not to pant too much.

The other just gave him a sinister smirk.

“Guess little rider, or did your almighty masters not tell you of their past?”

With that he pushed Harry back, making him stumble.

He raised his sword, but halted his movement, as if listening to something only he could hear.

“We’ll meet again, Kianathar, until then, this is something to remember me!”

Before Harry could move, the man had pushed him against rough stone, sending his sword flying.

“So much power... Athar....”

Harry was transfixed by the blue eyes. Then he blinked and started struggling, panic rising in his throat, but the man had the upper hand.

Ignoring Harry’s struggles, he traced his jaw line....

“Yes... power... never was there a more addictive kind of drug.”

He noticed a small cut on Harry’s cheek, due to a small flying pebble. Wiping the blood with his finger, he licked it; his eyes widened and his lips curled in a parody of a smile. He released Harry who immediately had his dagger out.

“We’ll meet again, Athar, you have my word.”



Before Harry's bewildered eyes, he disappeared in a swirl of black smoke.

His fingers went to the cut on his cheek. He felt the sticky blood under them and shivered. Who was that guy?!

He felt ill and shakily fell to the floor, leaning on the stone. The adrenaline rush was no longer helping him to keep up and he felt completely drained.

He seriously hoped no Death-Eaters was going to find him because he wouldn't put up a big fight. He was simply too exhausted to care...

"Harry?"

He was shaken out of his coma-like state by a gently shake of his shoulder.

"Sirius?" he said, tiredly.

"Come on, Harry. It's finished... We can go back."

His godfather's voice was slightly worried.

"Too tired..."

"You'll be able to rest at Hogwarts. Come on..."

With Shaky limbs, Harry made his way to a cart, leaning on his godfather. Whatever problems he might have with the man, he needed some comfort for now and Sirius was there to provide it.

The return to the school was a silent one. Harry was simply too tired to speak and Sirius did not wish to disturb the young man.

He brought him back to his room and after casting a cleaning charm and transfiguring his godson's clothes he put him in bed and left to get some rest himself. The next day would be difficult...



## Chapter 27 : Tension rising

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O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O

Harry stirred, still half asleep, his eyelids heavy and his whole body stiff. Light was falling directly on him, making him blink a few times to clear his vision.

There was a problem.

The sun didn't fall on his bed before the afternoon. Trying to make his way through the cobwebs that were presently constituting his brain, he tried to gather how he had ended up where he was.

If the stringent smell of the air, as well as, the wonderful aroma of the Skelegrow (not the sarcasm) was anything to go by, then he had ended once more in Hogwarts' Hospital wing.

That could explain the sun thing, well, that's saying if he had never noticed during one of his previous stays there that the sun didn't hit the wing before the middle of the afternoon...

As his brain started to function again, he went back to the cause of his present location.

Gringotts had been attacked.

That was a start.

He had gone there... he recalled a cart pursuit, a meeting with a... dragon, a Hungarian Horntail. He had lost control..., the dragon had been behaving strangely, and he couldn't find for his own sake what had made him fly in a vengeful rage...



Then, the Goblins, they had been chanting... they were attacked at the same time...

Suddenly a face popped to the forefront of his mind, making him shiver. The oval and slightly pointed face, with elvish ears, and grey skin was etched in his memory. But it was the eyes that unsettled him the most. Almond shaped greyish-blue orbs which seemed to mock him.

Who was that guy!

His fighting style had been familiar and either he was not that skilled or he had been playing with him. Once again, Harry cursed the fact that his magic and energy levels had been low due to his little outburst in the Headmaster's office. Had he been in complete control of himself, the fighter wouldn't have been able to corner him as he did.

Blinking a few times to get used to the light, he shifted slightly, groaning as his body didn't agree with him; however, he needed to get up if he was ever to get some answers to his questions...

Gritting his teeth, he sat up and looked around. The wing had been expanded. It was four times the size he remembered it completely filled with beds that had been added in the alleys. People were sleeping at two per bed in some cases and he spotted a few healers robes sprawled in the rooms, probably exhausted.

Harry thanks whoever could hear him for House Elves. Without them, the castle would have drowned in filth and blood as well as run out of supplies a long time ago.

He moved a little, wincing at the soreness of his muscles and moved to sit up.

He had been damn lucky once again. Besides a few scratch and cuts, as well as some minor burns, he had escaped the bank unscathed.

He couldn't say the same for everyone as he looked over the room.

From where he was he could see that some had lost a limb or had been cursed pretty bad, cut deeply, disfigured, as the woman on the



bed next to his could attest, three deep cuts marring her faces, going from her forehead to her jaw in a diagonal cut through her left eye and nose.

With a sigh, he centered himself, trying to assess his own state. He dove in his own core to look at his magic, falling in a mild trance at the same time. His reserves were quite depleted, but were rebuilding quickly, he would be okay in a day or two, provided he didn't exert himself too much, magically speaking. As he delved in his core, he was once again puzzled by the strange tangles in it. Arxeren had always refused to explain, them, though he guessed a part was due to the rebound Avada Kedavra... He checked on the link with Voldemort as he did everyday, skimming through the vision he might have received.

The Dark Lord had been absent from Gringotts, something that was strange in itself, unless...

Quickly, Harry came out of his trance and stood up, being careful not to make a sound. He had learned the hard way that Poppy Pomfrey was a very light sleeper and she had some kind of an alarm set up to warn her, should a patient need her or leave.

Apparently, she had not put one on him this time, or maybe it was a useless waste of energy at this time.

He spotted his clothes, folded at the foot of his bed and dressed without a sound, an ability he had gained thorough his stay at the Headquarters. After all, he had to be silent when he left in the mornings to train.

Once he had secured his knives on his forearms, he stretched a bit to be sure none of his blades was cutting or poking him.

He carefully sidestepped the sleeping or comatose bodies as he exited the room, making sure to close the door behind him.

He headed for the Headmaster's office to see who was around. It was about two in the afternoon, if his watch had not taken one too many hits during the fight the past day.



The castle was strangely calm for an afternoon. The atmosphere was subdued, even the stairs moved silently and the portraits were quiet. This eerie stillness was only broken by the light sound of Harry's footsteps on the stones.

Giving the password "Blasting Bubblegum Bars", Harry passed the gargoyle and climbed the flight of steps leading to Albus Dumbledore's office.

Knocking, he heard the mutterings inside quietened.

Upon hearing the weary 'Come in' from the headmaster, he stepped inside, taking in the different people present. All the heads of house were here, as well as the leaders of the different forces opposing the Dark Lord.

Hmm... Vaillant something... no... Valyan? He was the Unspeakable one. He however couldn't remember the name of the two others for the life of him.

He also spotted some Order of the Phoenix members, Ministry's workers, and some others he had never met so far.

Aware of the scrutiny he was under, as well as the suspicious looks, he looked at the headmaster with a sigh.

"Excuse-me for intruding, Professor, I'll come back later."

He turned and was out ignoring Dumbledore's call to stay.

He wandered the school for some time, looking for the masters, to no avail. Frowning lightly, dreading a bit what could have happened, he went outside, having decided to go fly a bit, only to freeze at the sight that met him. The four Elemental Scholars were out on the Pitch, instructing what look like about thirty-forty people. The Masters, crossed Lienhor, were standing in the stands, watching the spectacles of extremely annoyed Elementals trying to get weary, distrustful, unconvinced, and unmotivated people to do what they wanted.



Harry repressed a smile as he imagined the aggravated expressions on the scholars' faces. Foregoing his flying, he settled on riding. He hadn't been able to exercise Shadow this morning.

He was grateful that the founders had included parts of the school's grounds in the wards, if they hadn't, the students would have been confined to the Castle, something that would have been hard on everyone's mental stability and nerves. He had checked on the school's protections as soon as he had time to do so and with Teneb and under their guardians' guidance, they had weaved a few additional enchantments and alarms in them.

He finally reached the paddock and saw the Riding Master grooming some of the horses. Without a word, he took some brushes and a hoof pick and walked to Shadow.

He liked taking care of his mount and the stallion enjoyed being brushed, though he was slightly ticklish and Harry had to be extra careful when brushing his back. He took out a few ticks and looked for any kind of wound. After combing the mane and tail, pulling out the dirt and twigs the horse had gathered, he took the hoof-pick and started to take care of the hooves, getting rid of the mud and stones stuck there.

Petting his neck, he scratched a spot he found, just behind the ears, smiling as the stallion gave a little push on his hands. With a final pat, he approached another horse and started to brush the coat vigorously.

Lienhor kept working in silence, ignoring him. He only looked up when all the horses had been taken care of. Harry was now calmed down. Working with the horses was always soothing for him. He liked to know he was doing some good this way.

"Thank you for the help, Athar. I worked your stallion this morning..."

Harry nodded, surprised that the man had managed to mount Shadow. Either the horse had mellowed down or he had deemed the Riding Master worthy enough...

"Thank you, Master Lienhor."



The elf shook his hand brusquely in a dismissive manner. Wondering if the Elementals were still trying to teach, Harry walked back to the pitch.

He repressed a smirk as he saw some scorch marks in the grass. Hooch was going to have their heads. Silently he made his way towards them.

Tanita had created a small ball of fire that was hovering gently over her palm. With a voice, which clearly conveyed her frustration, she explained how to imitate her in a way that made Harry suspect she had been repeating this to her group for a long time already.

He eyed the people standing with the fire Elemental. All were under twenty-five years of age being the one where most wizards and witches finished their magical growth, thus locking the elemental gift if it hadn't been trained previously.

He recognized one lower year Gryffindor and a fourth year Slytherin. Then there was that Bulgarian curse-breaker, Charlie Weasley and three others Harry didn't recognize.

Most of them were either looking bored, annoyed, bordering on angry, or fed up. Only Charlie seemed to try his hand at this.

Tanita looked about to fry them on the spot to show them that this was not a trick and was very real indeed.

Rolling his eyes, Harry walked to her, flaring his aura just enough for her to sense it. She turned around and for the first time seemed to be relieved to see him.

"Athar, may I request you to show your.... Peers that humans," she said the word with distaste, "can do it too?"

Harry just turned his palm upward and a small fireball appeared over it. It was normal red, orange, and yellow flames and he dispelled it quickly, not wanting to deplete his magic more than it already was. He heard some gasps at this and refrained from smiling... Charlie Weasley turned to his palm and frowned, concentrated on his hand. Harry rolled his eyes.



“You need to relax Charlie. If you try to force it, it will be much harder for you...”

The older man raised an eyebrow, puzzled as Harry strode to his side.

“It’s like a river... you have to let it flow out of you...”

Charlie was thoughtful for a few seconds before nodding. He focused once more on his palm, but from his bearing, Harry could tell he was still trying too hard.

He looked around and saw Helion show his students how to raise their auras. Apparently, the older Elemental was better at teaching than the younger female.

Suddenly he heard a yelp and saw Charlie falling on his back, eyes wide as a fireball shot in the air, barely missing Tanita as it fell back, not that it would have hurt her much.

The scholar was massaging her temples.

“Good, now you have to hold it... like you do a cat. Fire powers can’t be subdued to one’s will; they can be tamed, directed, but not crushed.”

Harry decided to leave. He remembered very well his own first attempt to handle fireballs. The grass was still trying to recover...

When he stepped back into the castle, he saw students starting to exit their classes. That’s why the castle had been so silent... Classes had started again and after the attack the day before, it was no wonder that the atmosphere would be quite subdued. He contemplated the idea of finding Hermione and Ron to ask them what they knew of yesterday’s attack, but finally decided against it. They wouldn’t know what he wanted to find out. Therefore, he turned and went back to the school’s ground. He realized that if he wanted answers he would have to go to Gringotts to find them. He frowned at that... As much as he loathed doing so, he would have to take a master with him. He didn’t know that much about their culture and past and he had a feeling that whatever Voldemort had been after was linked to their history... Effilin was out of the question, Edevia as



well, both were far too set in their view for now, Nerthor, maybe, but his physique would not go unnoticed, so that left Lienhor.

He walked quickly back to the paddock, to see the Master riding a young gelding trying to get him to keep a regular pace while cantering.

Harry stayed silent for a while, knowing better than to interrupt the elf.

“Don’t you have better things to do, Athar?” he said finally, acknowledging his presence.

Harry walked to him, petting the gelding's head as he looked at his former master.

"I request a favor from you."

Lienhor sent him a sharp look, dismounted, and started to check the horse's legs for wounds.

“I’m listening.”

Harry nodded and started to speak.

“You know a battle occurred yesterday. The fight took place inside a Goblins’ bank. The Dark Lord sent an impressive force, backed by Basilisks, Chimera, Quintapedes, Trolls, and several other kinds of Dark creatures. I don’t know what or who he was after or if he managed to get it or not, however, I met and battled this fighter.”

With a wave of his hand, he conjured a picture of the guy he had encountered, trying to define it as well as possible.

Lienhor silently starred at the face, as if trying to memorize every feature.

He looked up, frowning slightly.

“Lead the way.”

O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O



Harry fire-transported them to London to the front of the Leaky Cauldron. Looking at the elf, he decided to spare himself awkward questions and placed a glamour on the both of them.

He showed Lienhor inside. The bar was in shambles, and he could see that the clean up was not finished. Broken tables and chairs littered the floor. The scent of blood, burnt flesh and wood had not faded, but the bodies and body parts had been removed, or at least, Harry hoped so. He tried not to ponder on the burn marks, the stains marring the floor and walls. Now was not the time.

Tom had managed to survive the second attack and with the help of neighbors and house elves was trying to salvage what little could be saved. Two aurors stopped them as they were about to enter Diagon Alley.

“Hey! You two! Stop right here!”

With a sigh, Harry turned to face the two men.

“Yes?”

The two Aurors were holding them at wand point.

“State your identity and business here!” snapped one of them, a steely glint in his eyes.

Before Harry could answer, they started to lower their wands, a bewildered look on their face.

“Oh! Alright, we didn’t recognize you... You can go.”

Suspiciously, he looked at Lienhor who was assessing the two men with a smirk.

Mind Magic... he himself, defensive mind wards aside, could do little more than dream walks, some small mind reading and telepathy, and only if he had been in contact with the person before, as well as some telekinesis. His mind link with Teneb allowed him to speak with him easily, but that was all. Suggestion was way out of his league.



“You did this...” he stated.

Lienhor just raised an eyebrow, before making his way to the Alley, as the Aurors were keeping the entrance opened for them to pass.

The Alley was in ruins. Most of the shops had been partially destroyed in the fight. Only Ollivander’s had escaped the destruction, but then Harry could feel the magic of the wards from where he was. It would take quite a lot to bring the shop down.

People were walking through the rubbles, trying to gather whatever could be salvaged as well as cleaning before they could start rebuilding.

Quickly, Harry guided the elf to the bank, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, but it was not that hard as those here were either focused on their task or too stricken by grief to notice two strangers... He had felt the anti-apparition ward around the Alley... It was quite old, so that meant the Death Eaters had either managed to tear it down or that they found a way around it. It couldn’t have been portkeys, since they needed to be tuned to the wards before use. So many unknown... He needed to know more about the Dark Lord’s plans...

They arrived at the bank and Harry nearly took a step back at the sheer power rolling from the building. Whatever the goblins had done, it was powerful and effective...

He rethought the past day... they had been chanting, a chant which aimed to create a ward dampening any magic from being used, except for Goblin magic...

He focused back on the bank, getting a feel of the magic surrounding it. There was no way his glamours would hold once inside.

With a weary smile, he motioned for Lienhor to follow him as he climbed up the stairs leading to the entrance. As soon as he had passed the bank’s doors which had apparently been repaired enough to close, he felt strangely empty, but tried to ignore the feeling as he kept walking.



“Potter!”

Startled, Harry whirled on his heel, hand raised. Mad-Eyes Moody was making his way towards him, a deep scowl etched on his face. Unfortunately, his shout had gathered a lot of attention, and everyone was now looking at the young man. However, before the ex-Auror could reach him, Harry had dragged Lienhor towards the entrance of the caves.

“Wait here Potter! You can’t go there!”

Ignoring Moody’s yell, Harry kept on walking and came face to face with a rather mean looking Goblin. The small creature sent a piercing look at the raven-haired wizard and the elf.

“Our directors want to see you M. Potter. If you and your companion would follow me...”

Without waiting for an answer, the goblin was gone, Harry and the elf behind him.

Moody glared at their retreating back. All of them had been forbidden to go down, and this little lad just had to show up and the Goblins were leading him down!

He had heard a lot about the Potter boy, good and bad. Weasley had painted him as a nice, naïve kid, Fudge and Skeeter as an attention-seeking lunatic, not that he was giving credit to those two, Lupin was praising his skills and potential to the sky while Snape could barely hide his disgust...

In Moody’s opinion, the kid had been just that, a kid. A boy pushed forwards and expected to free the world of the Dark Lord with a snap of his finger.

But the youth he had just seen hadn’t been the kid he expected. No, not all. The ex-Auror hadn’t lived up to now without being able to assess his opponent and the dangers he brought. And this lad was dangerous and needed to be watched.

He turned sharply towards an Auror.



“You, Tryson, get your arse to Hogwarts and ask Dumbledore what his Golden Boy is doing here when he should be at school. Redal! Gather all the files and info you can get on Potter, I want it by the end of the week in my office, got it?” he barked. “And the rest of you, get back to work!”

Meanwhile, Harry walked silently behind the Goblin. Lienhor was shooting curious look around him.

“Dwarfish work,” he stated.

Harry merely nodded, not seeing any point of explaining the obvious. Now that he had gone to Terio’s caves, the Dwarves’ influence on the bank’s underground building and laying out was easy to see.

They walked in silence, trying to ignore the stench of the bodies sprawled around, of the ripped body parts splattered around. Harry was looking straight ahead. He didn’t want to see the bodies or their faces; he didn’t want to learn their names or stories. He wanted them to remain just that, bodies. The Goblin finally stopped before a small steel door and knocked in a particular pattern on the carving before sliding his finger in a nearly invisible crevice. A clicking sound was heard and soon the door slid on the right, allowing them entrance. With an impatient move of his hand, the creature urged them to enter before stepping inside. With a mental shrug Harry move forwards, not looking back to see what Lienhor was doing.

The elf nearly collided with the young wizard as the latter had stopped, starring, wide eyed at the flutter of activity taking place before him. Goblins were hurrying everywhere, moving gems; gold away, carrying wrapped bundles he suspected were corpses, strange artefacts, and mean looking blades. They were slightly curved and double edged with a thin handle carved as to fit the hands of their wielders. They were made for quick moves, not heavy blow, unlike this scabbard-like small sword.

“If you would follow me,” the Goblin said, curtly.

Harry shook his head and nodded, shooting a look at Lienhor who was eyeing the weapons carried by the busy creatures.



They were led to a back room where five Goblins were shuffling through different papers. Two of them were extremely old and Harry remembered having seen them with the chanting ones.

The Goblins raised their head as they sat down.

"Thank you for agreeing to come, M. Potter," said one of them.

The young Athar nodded; trying to read the paper strewn on the desk as discretely as possible. He quickly gave up, the language being foreign to him.

One of the old ones coughed slightly before speaking up.

"Tell me M. Potter, do you happen to remember the consequences of the last Goblin war?" The raspy graveling voice unnerved Harry, but he held the yellowed gaze of the Goblin.

Harry raised an eyebrow. He had never been a History fanatic and Binns had done nothing to make him change his mind. However, he recalled Arxeren mentioning something about it...

"Not really..."

The Goblins smiled, or well, Harry guessed that the expression he now wore was supposed to be some kind of smile.

"Then, learn M. Potter that this last war decimated our rank and gave the occasion to Wizards to gain ascendant over us. It was then decided that we would take over the safe keeping of your kind's money, as no wizard at that time trusted another with his own gold... Since then, we have been the guardian of the wizarding world's wealth and patrimony."

He paused slightly.

"You have to understand, young wizard that it was decided in our agreement that the Goblins would stay out of Wizard's political and power struggles, keeping ourselves strictly to business matters, in exchange for complete neutrality for our banks. All of the different factions of Magic user agreed and signed a treaty. Dark wizard, light



Wizard, Veelas, Vampires, Werewolves, Elemental gifted, Sorcerers, Healers.... This treaty was binding and guaranteed us that our facilities and we would not be attacked, unless we broke the treaty first.”

Harry nodded; he could see where this was going.

“And Voldemort broke the treaty.”

“Exactly, young wizard; the Dark Lord broke a pact and so allowed us to take sides if we so wanted.”

Harry remained silent.

“The Goblins haven’t fought for centuries now, though we remained faithful to our traditions. Our numbers are not enough to form a real army and even then our fighting is too different from yours for it to be useful, but we will lend you our Assassins and Destroyers. In return, we ask for wards over some choice locations.”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“So you’ll side with us? Then why not speak with Dumbledore, he holds power, not me.”

The Goblin gave him a nightmarish smirk.

“I am not and never was a fool, Athar. We remember the Old Days when the Fair ones such as your companion could still be seen. We survived the Parting unscathed because we had stayed out of the conflict, but we remember and our Elders made sure to teach their apprentices so that the memory wasn’t lost. Your mark is a symbol of a power the Wizard called Dumbledore will never achieve, though he surpasses you in knowledge and experience. We don’t ask you for wizard wards, those are too easily broken. We ask you for true wards.”

Inwardly, Harry had absolutely no idea what ‘true wards’ would entail. He turned towards Lienhor who was frowning at the goblins. He felt his guardian silently sent his agreement. Before he could say so, Lienhor had spoken up.



“And what do you want warded? Those kinds of shields are draining; to create them without good reason would be pointless.”

The Goblins nodded.

“Indeed, we require those protections around three cores we use to sustain most of our dwellings, above and under grounds; as well as around our main underground city.”

Lienhor seemed deep in thought before giving a curt nod.

“Very well,” he turned towards Harry, “Athar, I’m willing to act as one of the anchors needed for such a task, but you’ll need a Magis and an Elemental to balance your grounding.”

Harry nodded, making a note to himself to contact Opheria and Kobalt as soon as possible. If those two had been really genuine in their desire to side with him, then they would help. He focused back on the Goblin.

“Very well, you have my word on that.”

The Goblin nodded, his expression unreadable, though Harry could feel his relief.

“Would you agree to sign a contract?” said another one, who had been silent until then, before handing Harry a rolled up sheet of parchment.

Carefully Harry unrolled it, and started to read it attentively. Finding neither loophole nor hidden demand in it, he signed it before handing it back.

“Now that this is done, Could you tell us what brought you here in this company, M.Potter? We didn’t think we would be able to see you so soon and so easily, after all we expected Albus Dumbledore to keep a close watch on you.”

Harry repressed an annoyed snarl. He was not Dumbledore’s puppet!



“I needed to come back and try to find anything that could explain to me who the stranger I met down in your caves was and how and why he was here.”

The Goblins shared a look. Finally the oldest one met Harry’s eyes.

“We can’t tell you much about who he is nor how he came to be involved in it, your companion may though. However, we might have an explanation for why he was sent here.”

He seemed to take a deep breath, as well recalling memories.

“We do not have written history, as you wizards seem so fond of doing, but we transmit it to our children as soon as they are able to understand it. As the Fair one here noticed, this place was built by dwarves and then, through deals, we managed to get it for ourselves.” He paused for a moment.

“We always were traders and our reputation of safe keepers was already well known long before the goblin wars started. People usually came to us when they wanted something to be guarded. This is how we came to build vaults and infrastructures and all the security measures we could think of.”

“One day, someone came to our ancestors, asking for the highest security vault we could provide. He even asked to add his own protections on it. As you expect, we ask about the thing he wanted guarded. He was reluctant to show us, but placed before the fact that we would refuse to take it unless we saw it, he finally relented.”

At this point, the Goblin looked at Lienhor.

“He showed us a fairly big metallic box, carved with runes all around it. We never managed to find what kind of metal it was. He opened it briefly, showing us its content. Inside was a single translucid stone, finely cut. Small red and gold veins ran in it, glowing slightly.”

Lienhor starred at them, stunned.

“The stolen stone....” He whispered; awe and rage mixed in his voice.  
“Who was he?”



The Goblins did not spare him a glance and ignored his outburst.

“We never found out his identity, nor his companions. Despite all our inquiries, we only discovered their races: they were six: two elementals, a magis, an elf and a human and a half human, half-elf. Every time we saw them they wore glamours. The half-elf was the one to contact us. He brought the box a week after we signed the deal and his companions came the day after to assist with the settling of the wards, as well as, adding their own protections. We never saw them again afterwards. They left us a sheet of instruction to power the wards every ten years. We followed their instructions and did so during our usual check up on the vaults. We never entered the vault again.”

Lienhor didn't seem to calm down, his face was pale and he was clenching and unclenching his fist, rage swimming in his eyes.

“And what happened then?” said Harry.

“Nothing, until yesterday.... After the wards of the alley were broken, the Dark Lord managed to pierce our own shields, despite the reinforcements, we had added after the London's massacre. We sent all our fighters down the lower levels as soon as we were warned people had managed to get there. However, we were stopped before managing to reach those vaults by the man you're inquiring about, as well as the group of Death Eaters he was commanding.”

He paused for a few seconds before sneering.

“You know the end of this story telling as well as me, wizard. This morning we started to make an assessment of the loss we underwent. Loss of life put aside, we were quite relieved to see that very few vaults had been broken in, besides vaults of known followers of the Dark Lord. However, the vault holding the stone had been opened and its contents were gone.”

Lienhor looked ready to kill the Goblins on sight.

“We do not know how they managed to bypass all the protections and shields surrounding this place. The only thing we found out is that most of the power supplying half of the wards had been leached.”



He looked at Harry.

“According to our agreement, we put everything we managed to gather on this matter in the folder Reog gave you. We would appreciate if the wards were set up as soon as possible.” With those words, the Goblins stood up and straightened themselves.

Harry followed their lead as did Lienhor.

“Thank you for your help, you are sure of your decision, then.”

The oldest Goblin sent him a vicious, chilling snarl.

“Young wizard, you can’t even fathom what we lost yesterday. Half of the Elders perished and with them, their knowledge since they had not finished the instruction of their apprentices. So don’t say that we’re not sure of our decision again. Reog will lead you to the vault; don’t use any magic down there, as it would prove quite detrimental to your health to do so.”

Harry nodded and sent a look at Lienhor. The elf was extremely pale, and looked about to collapse. However he still followed when they exited the room. Reog took them towards a wall and sliding his finger in a nearly invisible crevice revealed a hidden tunnel.

Harry was inwardly relieved not to see bodies there. They walked quickly, the sounds of their footsteps echoing around them.

He didn’t know how long they strode down this path but they finally arrived to a large platform. The advice of the Goblin seemed quite accurate as Harry could nearly feel the instable energies flowing around the place.

“No Magic” said the goblin snappishly.

Harry nodded and with a glance towards Lienhor, made his way to the vault. For the next hour, the both of them looked over every nook, every crevice of the room, to no avail. Whoever had done it had hidden his traces very well; Harry had to hand it to them. The only thing they gain from their searches, besides sore backs, was a magical residue belonging to whoever broke the shields. And even



then, the residue was faint, due to the goblins enchantment and partially mixed up.

Stretching a bit, Harry sent a stone flying against a wall. He enjoyed the crashing sound it made.

“Damn them!”

Lienhor was in a similar state but was managing to hide it better than the young man.

You do know that that poor stone’s biggest crime had been to lie in your line of sight and within your kicking reach.

Harry nearly blew up at this guardian. He was snappy, annoyed, sore and extremely ticked off with whoever had broken those damned wards.

Well, you’ll just have to call the S.P.L.A.S.H. the Stone Protection League Against Stone Hurlers.

Did you hurt yourself to come up with it?

Don’t you have better thing to do?

Getting you to calm down seems quite the right thing to do, unless you desperately want to end up a Squibs once those goblin protections are done with you, that is, if you are still alive by then...

Harry sighed, counting up to ten, breathing in and out and kicked another stone.

All right, anything else?

Silence answered him, and he mentally cursed his guardian. He couldn’t even start to understand the spirit. Stretching a bit, trying to loosen some of his neck muscles, he started to make his way back to the exit of the vaults, nodding to the various Goblins he met on his way out.

He started to make a mental list of what he had to do today.



Write some letters and send them.

Contact the Delacours and ask them to come back. The situation in France was getting alarming.

## Try to avoid the Order

Read the report from the scholars.

Speak to Reald about this stranger and what the Goblins had told them.... Better let Lienhor handle that...

He nearly hit his head on the nearest wall... he would be lucky if he managed to get at least one of those done...

O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O

He transported himself and Lienhor back to Hogwarts, landing on the Quidditch Pitch. Yes he knew, he wasn't supposed to apparate on Hogwarts grounds, but first, it wasn't apparition, then the small modifications he and Teneb had added, with their guardians' help, to the wards had somehow keyed them in.

How, he hadn't managed to found out, but he wasn't going to complain... Before they left the alley, they had gone to several stores, under the glamours Harry had cast as soon as they were out of the bank.

He had needed some books, as well as a few potions ingredients and some clothes. All in all, it had taken them about an hour, though they lost about ten minutes in Knockturn Alley, trying to find a bookstore there for some obscure books Harry had been interested in, and had known there was no way he would have found them in Flourish and Blotts.

Harry's first reflex was to check his surroundings and his eyes widened as he took in the scene unfolding before him. The scholars were gathered in front of Mrs. Hooch, who, from all appearance, seemed to be throwing a fit at the current condition of her beloved Quidditch pitch. The students, most of them either completely wet or



sporting singed hair and clothes, were looking eagerly at the shouting contest.

The grass of the pitch was a patch of ash circles, knee high grass or flowered circles, or even mud pits where the pitch had obviously been flooded.

Harry sighed wearily. He threw a look at the red-faced flying teacher and decided that he didn't want to get involved. Tension had been thick and he had been waiting for people to crack. He wasn't about to step between an irate witch and the scholars. The latter were old enough to take care of themselves. As he walked into the castle, he shut out Hooch yells, only to face the Hall's noise as it was now nearly dinner time.

With a nod to Lienhor and without showing any discomfort at the attention he was gathering, he walked to the Gryffindor's table, sat at Hermione's side and waited for the food to appear, mind focused on his current problem.

He didn't, however, miss Dumbledore's thoughtful look, nor the suspicious, weary, awed glances shot towards him by the rest of Hogwarts' population.

He was silent during the whole meal, mulling over his thoughts. Things were getting out of hand. Voldemort was upping the game and growing more powerful as his last move showed... What did he want with this stone? It was a powerful artefact but he would need a full circle to activate it: two humans, elves, magis and elementals and even then the participants would be severely drained for several days... But if he did manage to do it, Harry shivered, it wouldn't be nice...

To Hell with caution! He was tired of pretending, Teneb had been right, there was no point in trying to be something he was no longer, just to please and fit people's view of him.

He could feel Arxeren's approval in the back of his mind as he straightened on his chair, looking at the smashed mess which had been his meal... With a roll of his eyes he finished it quickly and stood up, making his way towards the door, aware of the eyes on him.



He turned his head slightly before stepping out of the room and his eyes met the silvery blue ones of Draco Malfoy.

The young blond was dressed in the customary black robes, but had changed during the holidays. He was taller and had filled out somehow even if he still had kept a somewhat fragile appearance. He hadn't yet gained his father's presence, but there was something wrong with him, as well as several of his Slytherin peers... Harry held his gaze for a few seconds then left as Malfoy went back to his talk with Parkinson.

As Harry walked to his rooms, he shed off his guise: by the time he was standing in front of the rooms he and Teneb had shared during the holidays, his Athar marks was standing in plain sight on his temple, the white streak was hard to miss in his dark hair, he was standing proudly and magic was coursing freely in him. A smile had spread on his face as he relished in the feeling of his power flowing through him without restriction.

He whispered his passwords, and stepped in, locking the door wandlessly behind him. He did not want to be disturbed tonight. He took off his robes and folded them on a chair. He then sat on the floor, falling in a comfortable position and, after slowing his breathing and closing his eyes, he fell in a light trance and sent his mind to the first plane. He didn't need to go through the sitting down, breathing slowly, closing his eyes part; but he found it easier to do so.

The First plane was unnerving this time. Usually it was light, filled with flowing energies, unless Arxeren had already changed it to something else. Tonight it was a grey bare room with shadows roaming on the edges of his vision.

Disturbing isn't it?

Harry whirled on his heel to face his guardian.

What is happening here Arxeren?

The guardian sighed wearily.



People are dabbling with forces best left untouched and the plane is reflecting it. A Civil War is about to start in Horevald, your Dark Lord is delving deeper in his Necromancy studies and is getting ready for his first massive summoning, you must get ready Harry.

And these shadows?

You remember what I told you about the Soul plane, about the fate of the dark or tainted souls?

Yes

The powers the Dark Lord is trying to tame are weakening the barriers of the second plane and those souls are trying to slither inside. They desire it above everything.

What would happen if they managed to enter it?

The plan would crumble and the powers flowing through it would be tainted.

Harry felt himself grow cold.

And what of the souls currently staying there?  
They would fade...

My parents...

Arxeren sent him a commiserated look.

All the guardian has been assigned to the protection of the second plane. But by doing so, there won't be anything to stop the shadow from creeping on this plane. People coming here without very strong mental wards or a guardian's protection could have their link to their body severed and the shadow would then possess them. You must not come back here Harry, not unless you have no other choice and even if you do, be extremely careful, I won't be able to help you a lot from now on... But I'll try.

There was a tensed silent.



Can I go see my parents once more at least?

Arxeren seemed torn but accepted.

You may, but only once. We're going to try to lock the plane as soon as possible.

Nodding, Harry concentrated and summoned a Pagat.

The being was not its usual bright self. It was pale and flicking in and out. Harry powered him more than usual and its brightness increased slightly, a sense of gratefulness filling Harry. In a blink of the eyes he was transported to the second plane and once again was flooded with wonder at the sight.

"Harry James Potter!"

He turned and saw his parents striding towards him, worry etched on their faces, despite their smile. They hugged him then took a few steps back.

"Not that we aren't happy to see you; Harry, but what are you doing here? You can't stay long, it's too dangerous!"

Harry smiled sheepishly.

"I just wanted to see you once more. Arxeren told me I might not see you again, and I wanted.... I wanted to say..."

Emotion was choking the young wizard. He didn't know if he would be able to see his parents again, and this time he had had time to get to know them and to say good bye, should things come to worse and the plane be either destroyed or sealed.

"Good bye?" said his mother gently, her hand cupping Harry's cheek.

Her son nodded.

"We're dead Harry. Nothing will change that and none of us regret it."

"Listen to your mother, Harry; you don't contradict red-heads..."



“Oh you!”

James smiled fondly at his wife.

“But, she’s right, and we had the chance to know you this time.”

Lily was looking at Harry with tears in her eyes.

“Look at yourself Harry. Both James and I are proud of who you became, even though we’d like you to show more self-survival instincts and caution. No matter what happens, what you may be told, know that we’ll be waiting for you when it is your time to pass away.”

James nodded but couldn’t stop himself from speaking, relieving the tension-filled atmosphere.

“Try to enjoy life a bit when you can, even if it looks like you won’t have it easy. Ask those twins to help. People will need laughter to survive these times. I want also to ask you a favour.”

The dark-haired man paused, looking at his wife. A bench had appeared and Lily was sitting on it, Harry at her side, his head on her shoulder as she passed her fingers through it in a soothing motion.

“I was not the best kid at Hogwarts. People may have told you grand stories about the Marauders and our pranks, as I’m sure Sirius and Remus did. But we didn’t really know when to stop. Well,” he said with a small grin, “Remus usually tried, but Sirius and I rarely listened...” He paused, seemingly remembering old times. “Anyway, I was used to getting my way and Sirius wanted to prove himself so we were quiet arrogant and...”

“Big-headed idiots,” supplied Lily.

“Thank you darling, for your support...” mumbled the older Potter. “We humiliated quite a few people and later, I realized, hurt them quite a lot. I can’t make up for this, but I would like you to repair an old deed of mine. In our fifth year we took something from Snape. I’d like you to return it to him. You’ll find it in the Gryffindor’s dorm, on the right wall, behind the fifth stone from the right, twentieth from the bottom.”



Harry nodded, frowning a bit.

"I will do it. Just tell me, is it that bad that I will escape the encounter with only the patented glare 'I'm-going-to-gut-you-and-feed-your-entrails-to-the-Thestrals' number 40, with a week long stay in the hospital wings so that I can regrow my missing limbs and get rid of whatever hexes I'll receive or with a death sentence and the finding of my body either cut into bits and kept in jars or hidden in the deepest part of the dungeons?"

James seemed to really think about it.

"I'd say one of the two." His expression was remorseful. "You'd best not loiter around once you have given it back..."

Harry sighed.

"I'll do it..."

James gave him a sad smile.

"I know this does not fit the picture you were painting of me, Harry, but just know that I changed-"

"-otherwise I would have never married him," shot Lily.

Harry shook his head, standing up. He could feel he had not a lot of time left. Being here was draining, and he still had not completely recuperated from his outburst and the fight.

"I'll have to leave soon."

Both his parents hugged him.

"We'll not say farewell, Harry, because we will see each other again. It is just a good bye..."

They stayed like this for a long time; Harry seeking reassurance and support from the parents he had learnt to know.

Finally, James pulled away.



“It’s time to go, Harry. Now, live, and show the world what Potters are made of!”

There was a somewhat bitter accent in his voice.

Lily put her head on his shoulder.

“You are our son Harry, no matter what happens. You. Are. Our. Son.”

With a shaky smile, Harry nodded and turned away from the couple as he walked away, he felt his legs grew heavy as this proved to be one of the hardest thing he had ever done.

He found himself back in his room, tears falling down his cheeks. He brought his knees to his chest and silently grieved for his parents for the first time in his life.

The morning came too soon.

Harry stretched, he had gone to bed somewhere in the night, but didn’t exactly remembered how. His eyes were a bit red, but he felt strangely at peace. He stood in front of the mirror. No more hiding, to hell with trying to surprise Voldemort! His Death Eaters and the elf like guy must have reported what they had seen in the fight and the stranger knew what he was.

He tied some of his hair back, leaving his scar and mark in plain view. His white strand of hair was standing out, but he didn’t think that a lot of people would realize what it meant... He discarded the black robes he had been wearing since his return. He was no longer comfortable in them. They were great to hide things in their folds, but a real hindrance in fighting. He put on black pants and a long sleeved blood red tunic with the customary high-collar circled with flames, the Athar mark was embroidered in silver above his heart. He put Terio’s gift in his pocket and fingered the golden scale Rexeran had given him, smiling slightly at the warm feeling which filled him.

Securing two small knives on his arms, he tied his sheath to his waist and checked his sword. Looking up, he smiled as he saw his



reflection then snorted; he was going to be as vain as Lockhart if he kept this up.

He left his rooms and headed for the paddocks. Lienhor was not here, something which was unusual. Shrugging, Harry did a quick check on all the horses and a more thorough one on the foal. Reassured that none of them were in dire need of care, he started to brush Shadow before putting the stallion's tack on. He worked his mount a bit harder, having grown a bit complacent these past weeks. Arxeren's words rang in his ears. He needed to step up his training if he wanted to survive Voldemort...

First of all, he needed to send his letters.

He walked to the Great Hall and ignored the stares his arrival gathered. He looked up at the staff table. All the Masters were here as well as the scholars and were conversing quietly, with sombre faces. They looked as he neared the Gryffindor table and Harry saw Lienhor give a slight nod approvingly.

"What's with the clothes, Harry? You didn't have black robes left? OUCH! Hermione; that hurt!" Ron yelped as Hermione elbowed him with force.

"What's the problem with my clothes?" said Harry, frowning a bit.

Ron reddened and looked down.

"Nothing, I-. Forget it."

Shrugging, Harry went back to his breakfast and finished it quickly. He stood up gracefully and left the hall, trying to ignore the hushed whisper following his retreat. He however didn't miss Hermione's snap at Ron.

"Ron, dearest, learn to keep you trap shut sometimes."

Not really seeing what the big deal was after all, he walked to the entrance and sat on the stairs, outside, enjoying the warm autumnal sun. With a wave of his hand, he transfigured a few pebbles into



parchment and a quill. He tweaked the spell a bit to lock the transfiguration.

Biting his lower lip, he tried to think how to pen these letters.

*Rider Kobalt*

*I will make this letter short. As you probably know, I'm currently staying in the human world. An attack was carried against the Goblins by the fighters of the Dark Lord I'm currently opposing. Upon this, the goblins offered our side their support if we agreed to ward some potential targets. I'm speaking of course of true wards. To do so, I send you this request for your assistance. I'm writing, rider Ophelia a similar letter should you wish to consult her. The warding will last for a day should you agree to help with it.*

*I'll await your answer.*

*Athar Harry.*

It was cold, it was formal, things Harry hated, but he was not comfortable enough with Kobalt or Ophelia to be more open. He copied it on another sheet of paper for Ophelia, changing the names, and also penned a message explaining this to Demenor and Teneb, the last one being much more easy-going in its phrasing.

He sealed the rolled up parchments and put them on the ground. Placing his hand over each of them in turn he muttered a few words and they disappeared soundlessly.

"Sulking Potter? Missing your fan-club?"

Harry sighed, not even bothering to turn, after this entire drawl was quite characteristic.

"What do you want Malfoy?"

The blond wizard walked until he was face to face with Harry.

"Nothing Potter, just... nothing."



Harry looked piercingly at his one time rival.

"You chose your side then, Malfoy," he stated in a blank voice.

The Slytherin met his eyes with an unreadable look.

"There was never a choice for me, Potter. I did what was expected of me."

"What about what you wanted?" asked Harry with a frown?

The blond laughed harshly.

"You're a piece of work, Potter!" he said once he had got a hold on his laughter. "Don't be so bloody naïve! Do you really think we get to choose? That we're the ones choosing our paths!"

"Yes."

"Then you're more blind than I thought. What we want is of no consequences. In the end, we all do what we were raised to do."

"That's rubbish! So you were raised to be a servant, to kneel before an insane hypocrite? What about you? Is that what you wanted for life, to be a tool, a servant, an obedient puppet for your master? Don't you want out?"

The grey eyes blazed with repressed fury.

"Spare me the sentimental drivel. Don't you listen to a thing I said! We are pawns Potter. I am my father's as you are Dumbledore's. The difference is that I walked in knowing that when you're still in denial. You can try to fool yourself, Potter, but in the end you'll do what they want you to."

"You're wrong," said Harry, standing up. "I chose my path. It's too easy to put the blame on others when you don't want to assume your decisions."

"Then you're a fool, Potter." Draco crossed his arm.

Harry locked his eyes with his.



“I made my choice, Malfoy, you made yours. Don’t let me find you on the field.”

“Same here, Potter.”

They held each others gaze for a few more seconds before breaking eye-contact and parting ways, Malfoy going back to the school and Harry taking a walk around the lake, trying to make sense of what had just taken place. He finally made his way back to the school and headed for the Room of Requirement. Hermione and Ron had brought him there once and explained how it worked to him.

Pacing three times before the wall, he opened the door and stepped in a duelling arena, with several training devices on a side. Shedding the tunic, weapons, except for a small knife, and boots, he made his way towards a rotating pole with thick bars stuck on it at different heights. A circle was drawn on the ground. As soon as Harry stepped in, the machine started to rotate, slowly at first then accelerating every two minutes. Harry started to dodge, jump, to avoid the bars, quickening his pace slowly. After fifteen minutes, he was swept by a low bar and fell to the grounds, rolling to get up immediately and thus stepping out of the circle, stopping the device at the same time.

Panting slightly, he took a five minutes rest, before stepping inside once more. An hour later, his body glistening with sweat, his damp hair sticking to his forehead, he was trying to ignore his screaming muscles as he went through it a fourth time. Finally he wasn’t quick enough to duck a bar and was hit in his solar plexus. He fell to the floor, trying to find his breath again after this hit.

He slowly got up, stroking gingerly his chest. He was going to be black and blue tomorrow, but he knew this would pay off. Walking back to his tunic, he took his sword, and slowly started his usual routine, slowing his ragged breath. He went through it several times, before switching to the Sword dance moves he had been refining and learning.

A gasp broke his concentration and he stumbled, barely avoiding a fall. Looking up, he saw members of the Junior Order standing in the entrance. Sighing, he brought down his sword and strode to his clothes and weapons, quickly putting them on.



“Bloody Hell!” he heard one said, “Did you see that?”

“Did you see his body?” he heard a girl ask, giggling, and blushed crimson at this, putting on his tunic faster than he had ever done.

He looked up and saw that the room had modified itself once more. Most of the training devices had disappeared, practice targets had appeared.

He made his way towards the door, realizing the Order needed the room to practice. He nodded to Hermione and Ron with a small smile.

“Blimey Harry! Where did you learn to fight like this?”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“Why do you think I had a sword?”

Ron flushed realising how stupid his question had been.

“Can you teach us?” said Dean, eyeing Harry’s sword with obvious envy.

Harry froze at this and frowned, thinking about it.

“No.”

He didn’t miss the outraged and angry faces.

“Harry...”

“No, Hermione. Sword-fighting is not a game. This is a weapon, a deadly sharp weapon. None of you would manage to learn more than the basis by the time you’ll need to go and fight. What good would it do to you? You would waste time that you could have used to practice and train, learning something which would be to no use to you.”

The witch pondered over his words, as did some of those listening.

She finally nodded.



“You’re right, it would be useless...”

“But Hermione...!”

“You only want to play with shiny sticks, Ron. Harry is right. We’re learning what we need in wandless fighting with Jenkins. We can’t afford to lose time just to satisfy your male pride...”

The redhead seemed incensed at it and turned to try to plead his case with Harry.

But said wizard was no longer there and Ron, as well as several boys were left fuming. The others just dismissed the idea, after all Potter had had a point.

O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O

Harry had escaped the Room and was making his way to his rooms but remembered the promise he had made his dad. He turned and took another staircase, finally ending in front of the Fat Lady.

The painting was the same and the woman was talking with another painting.

“-And so Violet told me that she had heard that-”

Whatever Violet had heard, Harry did not wish to know. He cleared his throat, catching the attention of the painting.

“Yes dear? Why aren’t you dressed already.... Teenagers this day!”

"I'd like to go in if you please."

"I need the password, young man."

“Harry Potter.”

“That’s right, a bright young man he is....”

With that, the painting opened the entrance to Gryffindor Tower and Harry quickly made his way to the fifth year boy's dorm. Counting the stones, he swiftly tugged on the one his father had described.



The brick slid out easily and Harry put his hand in the hole. He felt a small box and took it out. It looked like a square mahogany jewellery box, ornate with silver oak leaves and two swords acting as a lock.

Harry was curious about what could have been so bad in stealing this box... After all Snape wasn't exactly the jewelery kind, was he?

He knew he shouldn't do it, that it was a breach of privacy, but he really wanted to know. He pushed the two swords aside, unlocking the box and opening it. Two platinum rings with some kind of crest made of the same two swords crossed over a raven, surrounded by oak leaves, as well as a thin silver chain holding what looked like a Gringotts key rested on black velvet.

With a shrug, he closed and locked it, putting it, after shrinking it, in a pouch hanging at his belt. He exited the tower and made his way towards the dungeons but met Filch on his way. The caretaker seemed pissed at something or somebody.

"POTTER!"

The young wizard sighed.

"Does this beast belong to you?"

He was holding Lucky by its neck and shaking it slightly as he spoke.

Harry cursed lowly. He had forgotten to take the little fox to Hagrid this morning and who knew what mischief the little trouble maker had landed itself in.

"Yes."

Filch had a nasty sneer on his face as he all but shoved the red-furred creatures in Harry's arms.

"The Headmaster told me about your pet." The man spat the last word. "As if those cats, not you my sweet," he said as Miss Norris, "were not enough!"

"What did Lucky do?"



He turned back to Harry and hissed.

“Your little beast ate a whole lamb and ruined the kitchen! I warn you Potter if I find him once more there, I’ll make a scarf out of it!”

Harry merely nodded and watched the man walk away, his cat on his heel, muttering about ruddy teenagers and blasted pets.

He looked down at Lucky, frowning disapprovingly. The red beast was nearly asleep, probably to sleep off all the meat it had just eaten. He rolled his eyes. Well, as he had not caught it in the act, there was little he could do. He quickly brought it to Hagrid who was happy to watch over it for the rest of the week as Harry thought it would be better if the small fox didn’t end in Filch’s range of sight for a few days... Seeing it was nearly lunch time, he headed for the Great hall. He was one of the first ones there and he took out the diary Queen Valera had given him just after the ceremony. That reminded him he still had to check the information. He had been writing in it for some time when students started to fill the Hall. Closing it, he cast a strong locking charm on the cover before shrinking it and placing it back in the pouch, with Snape’s box.

He saw his friends walked to the table, apparently arguing about something. As soon as the redhead spotted the raven-haired young man, he made his way towards him, his face stormy.

He was about to speak, when Harry raised his hand.

“No, Ron. I won’t. I already told you what I had to say about it earlier. You just have to accept it, or ask Jenkins to teach you. I won’t be held responsible for students gutting other students.”

This didn’t seem to calm the redhead.

“Right! Of course! You can learn it but not us! If you managed to reach this level in a year, it can’t be that hard! And you were not that fit either before you disappeared...”

Harry looked up and Ron took a step back.

“You want to learn the way I did, Ron? All right!”



Harry stood up and walked to the staff table, stopping in front of a sneering elf. He talked animatedly with him for some minutes. The elf went from downright angry to interested and scornful. He finally nodded reluctantly, before sweeping the hall with a satisfied smirk.

Harry walked back to the table, with a dark face.

“There, Ron, I got my Sword master to teach you. I do hope this will be as .... Profitable to you and all of those who think themselves able to learn it, as it was too me, he will hold lessons after classes tomorrow...” he snapped, getting even moodier when he saw the satisfied expression on Ron’s face.

“Thanks Harry!”

The redhead turned to Dean and Seamus and started to talk with them, the three apparently enthusiastic about this. Shaking his head, Harry returned to his plate and started to fill it with the food which had appeared on the tables.

Neville shared a look with Hermione as the redhead kept on talking.

“I think signing up for this is not a very good idea...” he said.

The brown-haired witch nodded.

“Yes, Ron seems to have forgotten some facts about our hosts...”

“Won’t you try to talk him out of it?”

Hermione shook her head.

“No. This will be a lesson. He is a bit jealous of Harry right now. He matured a lot this year, but now that Harry’s back, he seems to slip back into the old Ron he was a year ago. I think he needs to be reminded of what Harry went through to gain the skills he now possesses...”

Neville nodded and turned to speak to a seventh year girl who was part of the same Herbology study group as him and with whom he was trying to cross-breed a devil snare with an itching root.



Harry finished his lunch quickly but was surprised as an owl swooped in and landed in front of him. Taking the scroll he skimmed through it.

*Harry..... Meet me after lunch.... Office..... password: Sticky Strawberry Skittles.*

Great!

He refolded the parchment and stood up, exiting quietly the hall, not missing some giggling, but, after all, what had happened in the Room of Requirement must have spread around...

Stopping in front of Dumbledore's gargoyle, he said the password and climbed up to the Headmaster's office.

Knocking, he waited for an answer before stepping in.

Dumbledore was sitting at his desk, petting Fawkes. Nobody else seemed to be here and Harry was thankful for this small mercy.

"Good afternoon Harry, take a seat. Lemon drops?"

Declining the offer, Harry sat down.

"How are you doing?"

"As well as can be expected..."

Munching on one of his sweets, the older man eyed his former student.

"Mad-Eye had a surprising tale to report to us yesterday..."

Harry rolled his eyes.

"Headmaster, could you get to the point, please?"

"Very well. This morning, I received a letter from the Goblin council. And given Moody's report, I can only assume that you are part of this. I will not comment on the fact that you went to the Alley without protection, but I would like you to tell me what took place with the Goblins."



Harry looked around, trying to decide what to tell.

“They agreed to side with us, on the condition that we warded some of their places.”

The aged wizard nodded, eyes twinkling.

“This is welcomed news, I will gather a team and send them there...”

Harry raised his hand.

“No Headmaster, they request true wards.”

The twinkle dimmed slightly.

“I see... Will you manage to convince them to help?”

Harry shrugged.

“I sent letters and I’m waiting for their answers.”

“Good, good... Now, Harry, I wanted to discuss the fact that you-”

Harry would never know what Dumbledore wanted to say as a loud knocking cut him off. Frowning slightly, the Headmaster gave entrance to those waiting behind his door.

Ron, Dean, Justin and another Hufflepuff walked in followed by three floating bodies. Harry’s eyes widened as he saw who was being floated inside. Yes, bushy beard, small height and wide shoulders, carrying axes.... There was no mistaking his friend and companions.

Ron saluted Dumbledore and levitated the bodies down.

“Headmasters, we found those first years wandering on the grounds during one of our patrol. They refused to take off their disguises or to give back their fake weapons.”

Meanwhile Harry was undoing the charms, trying to bite down his laughter. He took off the Petrificus charm and immediately, the three previously petrified sprang to their feet.



“Where is this little mongrel! I’ll show him!”

Ron turned towards them, rolling his eyes.

“Harry, why did you free them? Do you know how hard it was to get them?” he bent down a bit. “Now you three, your tricks are not working! Your masks are great, but the first years are not allowed on the ground without supervision, even less when you have classes.” He had spoken with a slightly condescending voice, as if he was talking to little children.

“You, You, you little idiotic wand-waver!”

“Be a little more polite if you don’t want to be in detention, firsties.”

Harry was by now shaking hard in his efforts not to burst.

The dwarf, because it was a dwarf, nearly choked.

With a sigh, Ron, walked to him and bent a little, taking hold of the beard and giving it a hard pull.

“Now, come on...”

The dwarf let out a pained shout, followed by a second as the beard stayed in place.

Ron shook his head.

“You did a good job on your masks; it even feels like real skin.”

He gave another hard pull, drawing a sharp howl from the dwarf. Frowning a bit, Ron turned to Harry who was by now crying with mirth.

“Hey, Harry, a little help, please?”

“Harry! Tell this pea-sized worm-brained idiot that if he...”

Getting a hold on his laughter, Harry wiped his eyes and looked at Ron.

“Ron, may I present you Terio, one of my dwarfish friends....”



OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Ron laughed, as well as Dean, Justin and the other boy, but quickly stopped, seeing Harry was apparently not joking and that come to think of it those axes seemed rather deadly and real....

“Err... Harry, you’re serious?” he asked, paling a little.

A growl was heard from Terio’s throat, as Harry nodded, trying not to laugh.

“Well... in that case... we... err.... We’re going to resume our patrol, aren’t we?”

The others nodded and the four of them were quickly gone.

Terio turned an annoyed face towards Harry.

“You had nothing better to do than laugh, did you?”

“I’m sorry, Terio, but you have to admit that it was funny...”

The dwarf grumbled, but Harry could see it was more for show than real anger.

“But I forget myself. Wealth and Riches to you Terio and to your companions.”

“To you, too,” replied the smaller man. “You already know Anok and next to him is Kendar.” He turned towards his companions. “These humans are Athar Harry Potter and -,” he paused, looking at the old wizard.

“Albus Dumbledore, Hogwarts’ Headmaster,” he provided, with a gentle smile.

The three dwarves sat by Harry’s side and a tense silence filled the room.

“Why are you here, Terio?” finally asked Harry.

The dwarf sent him a piercing look.



“I thought of calling you, but, our kings deemed the situation serious enough to sent envoys here. What took place two days ago in the underground did not go unnoticed. Our rulers are getting worried. Some researches were done after the Vampires contacted us; yesterday the Goblins also ordered a large amount of weapons. We were sent to assess the situation...”

Kendar looked at the two humans.

“More importantly, to see if this was part of your never ending stream of wizarding wars or if a war is nearing for us all ...”

Harry nodded as Kendar continued.

“We request the files and information related to this fight, as well as a private meeting between us and the Goblins attacked.”

Dumbledore nodded.

“It will be done. I offer you our hospitality for the duration of your stay.”

The dwarves nodded their agreement as they stood up.

“I’ll have the files brought to your rooms. You know how to read our language or will you need translation charms?”

Terio turned to Harry.

“If you will be able to cast those charms for us, it will be much appreciated.”

The young wizard nodded his agreement.

“A house-elf will show you to your room...” said Dumbledore, rising to his feet. “I will warn my staff, to prevent any misunderstandings...” A small crack startled them and the small elf cowered before the axes aimed at him.

“Polly is sorry to bother, but Master Dumbledore called...”

The headmaster smiled benevolently.



“Yes, Polly, I would like you to show our guests to the guest rooms in the dungeons, behind the portrait of Persephone. You’ll also provide to their needs.”

The little creature bobbed its head enthusiastically and left the room, the three dwarves and Harry on its heels. They quickly made their way down the various staircases. Harry was praying they wouldn’t meet any elf on their way but apparently Fate did not agree. Fortunately, it had been Reald and he had said nothing, apart from telling Harry he needed to see him as soon as possible.

Once the dwarves were settled in their rooms, Anok and Kendar started to go over the various reports Polly had brought them, while Harry and Terio talked.

Harry explained the recent development to the dwarf. By the time he was finished, the dwarf had a grim face.

“This is not good, not good at all. Those stones are a danger, we have always been opposed to their use, or at least we asked for their concealment and protection. But as usual those grass lovers thought they knew better... look where it led them... And these Goblins really know nothing of the identity of those who hid the stone there?”

Harry shook his head.

“No, or if they do, they are not saying anything.”

“Typical of Goblins” huffed the dwarf, puffing on a long pipe. “Time will tell...”

Harry remained silent for a while.

“How is Teneb?”

This had been worrying him for awhile. He hadn’t had any news from his blood brother for some times and it ate at him.

Terio sighed.



“He came to see me a few days ago. He is exhausted, a bit thinner but that is to be expected. The situation is getting worse and worse, Valera and her son are trying to keep control of the kingdom, but Gerian of Meyan has gathered his own army and from our source, a civil war is unavoidable. You probably will be called back soon.”

“Why? Teneb is already there, one Athar should be enough...”

Terio shook his head.

“You remember when I told you some idiot had found small power stones? Well, there were strange occurrences near Keis. The weather kept changing, animals started to behave strangely or to change slightly. We are nearly sure that Gerian was testing something there.”

Harry gripped his chair’s arm tightly.

“Does this fool know what he is playing with?”

“Well, Celen and his mother are going to have a right mess on their arms and two Athars will be needed to try to nullify those power stones.”

Harry stood up and started pacing.

“Any news of the Vampires?”

“They sent in another order, for magic inhibitors.”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“Really?”

“Yes, was a bit surprised, we thought they would remain out this conflict given what the first one cost them... But apparently they are going to join one side, or create a third one.”

Harry looked at his watch. They had been talking for quite a long time and the last class of the day was over. Knowing that this would be the better moment to see Snape as their sessions had been postponed



until a schedule could be drawn, Harry bid good evening to the three dwarves and headed for the Potion Master's office.

Knocking, he waited for a snappy "come in" to step in the room.

The man was apparently grading what summer homework he had assigned his student, slashing whole paragraph with red ink and writing comments, all the while muttering annoyingly against incompetent brats who would never understand the difference between Potions and Soup.

"Professor?"

The man looked up sharply.

"Potter? What are you doing here? I thought even your bird-sized brain could understand a simple letter."

Harry rolled his eyes and rummaged through his pouch, taking out the box and enlarging it.

"I was asked to give it back to you."

Without waiting any longer, he left swiftly. Given the slack-jawed expression of his former teacher and the stormy glint appearing in his eyes, he judged it nefarious to his health to stay any longer.

He closed the door and strode up towards the scholars room, remembering Reald's demand.

As a staircase started to move just as he had been about to step on, he wondered what the founder had been thinking when they built the school.

He found the elf in the rooms which had been reserved for their stay pouring over a thick half rotten book. He cleared his throat to try to get his attention.

"Athar? Good. Come in and take a seat. I'm nearly done."



Gingerly Harry seated himself in a chair and looked around. Parchment, diagrams and books were everywhere in the room. Five minutes passed, only interrupted by the quick scratch of Reald's quill.

"There!" He cautiously closed the book and looked up towards Harry.

"Thank you for coming."

Harry nodded, waiting for what the elf had to say. Sensing this, Reald stood up and went to a small table, picking up a thick folder.

"I called you to hand you the final results of our researches. I'll leave tomorrow; Celen arranged my transport back to Horevald."

He stared at the young wizard.

"I strongly encourage you to read it. Your dark Lord should not be able to perform his ritual, since he will lack one key ingredient."

"And what is it?"

"Some blood from an old line of human Enchanters which is now extinct and from Luctan's line."

Harry frowned.

"Why couldn't he get them?"

"Nobody knows who the descendant of that Enchanter is, and Luctan's line ended with him since he killed all his family to try to fulfil his goals."

Not really reassured, Harry nodded.

"Very well. My thanks for your work."

Reald shook his head, his braids bouncing from one shoulder to the other as he did so.

"We did what we were ordered to do. You have nothing to do with it. I just want to warn you, young Athar. Stay clear of Necromancy, nothing good can come out of this knowledge..."



Reald's gaze had a burning intensity.

"If I see you try even the simplest spell, I will not hesitate to subdue you."

Harry looked away, unsettled.

"I understand..."

"See that you do..." With those last words, Reald went back to his book and writing.

Still frowning, Harry made his way out. He spent the rest of the night reading both the folder Reald had given him and the one the Goblins had handed. Once he was done, he couldn't shake the feeling that despite what the elf had said, there was something wrong with the whole picture.

The next day Kobalt and Opheria arrived. They, with Harry and Lienhor travelled to Gringotts and spent the day with the goblins, creating the wards.

True wards were anchored on a stone which then was activated when placed where the users wanted their shield. Once switched on, the wards could be only destroyed either by a complete leeching, which was something which could be stopped, or by the death of the four creators. The crafting of the anchor required four casters from different races, the strongest set being Magis, Elemental, Human and Elf. It was not that difficult, just draining. They had to twist their powers together, through a series of enchantments, while setting the parameters, like range, height... It was a long and tedious process that was lost with the parting of the different races.

Once they were done, they went back to Hogwarts and both riders and Reald left. Harry watched them fly and disappear. His meeting with Kobalt and Opheria and gone well. Both of them, while quite formal when addressing him had seemed extremely curious about the human world. He only regretted he couldn't have talked more to them. They had been on edge and what they had said had only reinforced the dread he felt for his blood brother.



The rest of the week flew by, the highlight being, for Harry, Effilin's lesson. He had come under an invisibility charm to watch and make sure the Sword master would not go to far.

He didn't regret it.

The elf hadn't lost his way with words and had been extremely vocal. And if nothing else, at least his stay in the human world would extend his knowledge of bird names and various endearments...

At the end of the session, most of those courageous... or stupid enough to sign up for this club had been limping back to their common room while nursing their bruises.

The next best moment had been when they had realized they couldn't drop the course.

Ron had been extremely vocal about it, until Hermione had reminded him he had been the one foolish enough to sign for it.

All in all, Harry had an eerie feeling as he woke up on Sunday morning. He had spent the past two days training, or pouring over the folders or various books.

As usual he went to have his morning session with his stallion, working while Lienhor was taking care of the other horses. He then went back to the Great Hall after showering and putting on his black pants and blood red tunic. He was half way through his meal, talking quietly with Hermione about a particular tricky shielding spell when a man walked in and went straight to Dumbledore, speaking in hushed whispers.

The headmaster nodded and the man turned to the hall.

Having a feeling this concerned him, Harry stood up, taking a last bite from his apple.

Without speaking, the man motioned for him to follow as he exited the room.



Puzzled, Harry looked towards Dumbledore and saw the man nod. He didn't miss the piercing glance shot by the Potion master. Since he had handed him the box back, the man had seemed to mellow down slightly. Harry, nor the rest of the school hadn't miss the fact the potion professor, was not wearing his customary black robes, but an imposing dark blue set with silver lining, as well as, the fact that his hair was no longer falling in his face but was pulled back.

He stepped in the entrance hall and followed the man onto Hogwarts ground.

An elemental portal was opened on the pitch which was still recovering from the last Elemental class. Eight figures were standing in front of it. Harry had never seen them before and threw up a shield, just in case. As he got closer, he got a better picture of the strangers.

The figures were wearing long flowing white robes with the runes of Lunai and Solyen embroidered on the front. A black belt supporting a sword was circling their waist, and Harry could spot the small bulge indicating the presence of knives or daggers on their forearms. Their white hoods were raised and a black veil hid their faces, making them look like some kind of spirits.

Cautiously, Harry walked to them. He had guessed who they were. Teneb had spoken of them once, as he tried to explain the power balance of the elfish kingdom...

*And then you have the Eldoiras."*

*"The what?"*

*"Eldoiras, they are the temples' defenders."*

*"I thought the temples were a totally non aggressive side."*

*"Yes and no. The Eldoiras were created to help the Dragonriders. But while we answer to the King, they only answer to the Xhan and Xhana."*

*Harry had seemed thoughtful.*



*"But wouldn't the Dragonriders and Eldoiras be too alike?"*

*Teneb had smiled.*

*“They preserve the temples independence, and are the justice seekers. When in doubt, a judge can ask for an Eldoiras, they also step in during wars to help us and the people. During period of peace, they practice and are considered like regular Djoiras or Deisers. They wear only two colors: grey when are not fighting, white otherwise.”*

As he gazed at them, Harry felt his innards grew ice-cold. They were wearing white.

The one whose robes were lined with red turned towards him. From her figure, he guessed she was a woman.

“Athar Harry. You are required to come back to Horevald.”

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At the same time, Voldemort sat on his throne, Nathael Valdon and Jan Girtschenka standing in the shadows, as well as some of his Elite and his Inner circle. In front of him stood his prize.

He smirked; the creature was tall with grey skin and piercing blue eyes. Dark hair tied back, slightly pointed ears and a mouth set in a dark smirk completed the main feature of the man standing in front of him.

“Is this body to your liking?” finally said the Dark Lord.

The Elf-like creature, flexed his arm.

“Yes... Definitely... A shame it will fade in a few moments...”

Voldemort's smirk widened.

“I will provide a new one for you, should you agree to the deal I proposed you.”

The elf look-alike sneered.



“What guaranties do you give me you won’t back down?”

“A wizard oath.”

The creature seemed to think it over for a few minutes then sneered.

“And what will you do about the human Athar I encountered during the attack.”

“What?”

“This one,” he projected a picture of Harry, raising his sword.

“Potter,” hissed Voldemort, “That infuriating boy....”

The man raised an eyebrow.

“I gather you know each other...”

The smirk Voldemort sent him was chilling.

“You can say we are old acquaintances...”

The other smiled coldly.

“Then, you should make sure your acquaintance takes long and prolonged holidays.”

“He will...”

“Good.”

“So do we have a deal?”

The elf like creature started to shudder. With a snap of his fingers and vial and a knife appeared. He cut his palm and let his dark thick blood fill the vial before closing his wound and throwing the piece of glass to Voldemort who caught it deftly. Shuddering once more, his face started to wrinkle as he smirked.

“We have a deal.”



Voldemort watched dispassionately as the body crumbled to the floor before him. With a snap of his finger, he called a house elf and ordered the creature to clean the mess as he contemplated the vial...

"Luctan's blood," he whispered in awe... He only had to find a descendant from the Enchanter and nothing would stand in his way. Carefully he handed the vial to Nathael who left with Jan to put it in a safe with some preservation charms.

"Lucius!" he barked.

The blond man stepped forwards and knelt at his feet.

"Master."

"Bring me all the files, all the papers, books you can find on the Enchanter. Take as many men as needed. I want results and quickly!"

"Yes Master, but we'll need access to Hogwarts' Library."

"The Serpents will take care of it."

He could see the blond was troubled and decided to humour him; after all, this day had been satisfying.

"Why not ask Severus? I can nearly hear you think it, Lucius. Why endanger my Serpents?"

The Dark Lord made a pause....

"Severus is and has been a spy for many years... He may call me master, but he serves another one. One called Dumbledore."

There were some outraged gasps, but little surprise. After all, what had surprised these men had been to see the Dark Lord accept the potion master back after only several days of punishment.

Lucius bowed his head.

"Forgive me then, my lord, but then, why-?"



“Crucio!” Voldemort lifted the curse after two seconds.

“Do not presume you can question me Lucius, Severus still has his use for now, which is the only reason he is still alive.... Now, you were given a task, do not fail me.”

The dismissal was clear and the room emptied itself as Voldemort reflected on what Lucius had said.

He had first wanted to kill the traitor, he still wanted it. However, Severus was more useful alive than dead for now. In addition, to the man’s brilliance at potions, he was a way to feed false information to the old fool, but more importantly, he was a way inside Hogwarts wards.

The old fool knew very little about the Dark mark and Voldemort planed to use this to his advantage when the right time would come... Then, Severus would be fair game, and his Death Eaters would see what happened to people who betrayed him!



## Chapter Twenty Eight

The one whose robes were lined with red turned towards him. From her figure, he guessed she was a woman.

“Athar Harry. By the oath you took, Queen Valera requests your presence back to Horevald.”

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Harry felt his innards twist.

Truth to be told, he had been expecting a summons. After all, he had been warned enough time that it would happen. However, he didn't want to leave his world behind; not with the latter development.

But he couldn't refuse Valera's request. At the moment, the wizarding world was not in danger, but the Elvin one was. They had need of his help and, unless he wished to have his powers stripped from him and his life slowly and painfully drained from him, his oath forced him to comply.

He bowed his head.

“Very well, I will pack and arrive at Horevald as soon as possible.” His face was blank as he straightened himself. “Do you wish to remain here until my departure?”

The Eldoiras shook her head.

“We are needed and can't stay there any longer than necessary. People will wait for your arrival. Be quick.”

Harry nodded sharply.

“May Lunai and Solyen guide your steps.”

The dark haired wizard smiled bitterly. It looked like prayers were going to be needed if they wanted to live through this storm...

“And yours.”



With those parting words, he whirled on his heels and strode back to the castle, trying to think of everything he needed to do before leaving once more.

He halted in the entrance and grabbed his golden scale necklace.

*Rexeran?*

A wave of joy hit him.

*Astyan? Are you coming?*

*As soon as I can, Will you be able to come to bring me back?*

*I'm afraid I won't. Gae and I are attending our council. I will join you as soon as I can, I promise you, my bonded.*

Harry was a bit disappointed but pushed the feeling away.

*I will see you soon then.*

*You will, be careful, Astyan.*

Harry relished in the warmth of Rexeran's acceptance and unconditional love and adoration for him.

He dropped the scale and walked back to the Great Hall. The students had left the Hall and the adults were seated at an enlarged teachers' table. Snape was there too. Apparently Voldemort had gotten tired of having to go over whole records of Potion classes and had taken out his little recorder

"...to fetch the Athar Harry."

Dumbledore seemed tired and that only made Harry feeling guiltier of leaving. He made a note to warn Terio as soon as he was back at Horevald. The dwarves had left after three days of enquiries and there had been no words from them since then.

He walked in, holding himself straight and looking in his headmaster's eyes. The aged wizard seemed to understand what had happened and what he was about to do.



“They called you back.”

It was more an assessment than a question and Harry only nodded.

Several members caught on that and looked at Harry with disbelieving, accusing or sad looks.

“They did,”

Sirius sprung to his feet.

The man had a stormy look on his features.

“What do you mean? You aren’t going back there! You owe them nothing after what they did.”

Harry massaged his temples. He knew that his decision would not go over well and he had to warn Hermione and Ron too.

“Sirius, I have to go back. I swore an oath. Would you like me to be an oath-breaker? Would you be able to look at me again if I betrayed my word?”

This didn’t seem to calm the dark-haired man.

“Harry, you took an oath to protect innocents, didn’t you? Well there are innocents there who need protection. You can’t leave!”

Dumbledore raised his hand.

“Sirius, calm down.”

The man focused his anger on the headmaster.

“Don’t tell me you agree to this, Albus, that you caution this nonsense! Do you remember how they treated Harry, how those masters have treated us so far? They despise us, they don’t want our help.”

An Auror spoke.

“Black is right. They scorn us. I say we let them deal with their own problem. We need Potter at the moment. If they’re so powerful, then



they'll be able to get out of this on their own," spat the man. He seemed to resent the master quite strongly and Harry wondered what had happened between them.

The people started to speak at the same time, under Harry blank gaze. Finally he shot his headmaster a look and the old man stood up, casting a Sonorus on his throat.

"Silence!"

The hall echoed for a bit. Harry finally steeled his resolve.

"I'm leaving as soon as I can. I'll try to come back at the first occasion." He held up his hand. "No, Sirius, try to understand this. This is my oath and I'm bound to fulfil it."

The ex-convict shook off Remus' arm as the werewolf had tried to make his friend sit down.

"No, I don't understand Harry! I don't understand how you can decide to abandon your friends and family, your world to help some bastards that never did anything but humiliate or hurt you from the moment they saw you. I don't understand how Prong's son can betray us like this!" Remus yanked harder on his arm.

"Sirius!"

"No Remus!" He turned back to Harry who had paled a little. The young man had taken a step backward. "Harry..."

"Shut up Black! Get a hold on yourself!" snapped Snape. "Your godson has no choice in this. So use whatever brain cells you have left and get it down your thick skull."

Harry looked strangely at the Potion master. He was wearing dark midnight blue robe with a silver trim and collar. He also had one of the platinum rings on his right middle finger.

Sirius snarled at the man and turned back towards Harry, opening his mouth, but Harry cut him.



“No, Sirius, don’t say anything. I’m leaving and it’s final. I’ll leave the Headmaster a stone to contact me at all time if needed. I’m going to pack my things. I’m sorry you can’t understand this.”

With that, he placed a quartz on the table and turned to leave.

“Harry! Stop right here, Harry! Harry!”

Sirius shot forwards but fell flat on his face as he was hit with a full body-bind. Snape pocketed back his wand in his flowing sleeves.

“You always were and hot head idiot Black and this never changed. We managed to survive without the brat until now, I don’t see why we won’t be able to do so again,” he sneered. “He is not a child, you mutt, neither is he Potter reincarnate, or a god who’ll defeat the Dark Lord with a snap of his fingers.”

The Animagus glowered at his childhood rival.

“Be quiet, Sniv-Snape, you never could stand Harry because of some petty grudge you had against us. No wonder you don’t mind him leaving!”

The Slytherin sneered darkly.

“My reasons for the dislike of the Potter name were my own.”

“You were always a petty bastard, Snape. The fact that you have finally decided to display your Patriarch status, instead of just wearing those master robes of yours does not change this...”

Snape’s eyes darkened with anger and he took out his wand.

“And whose fault it is that I couldn’t access my birthright, Black? Who stole my heir rings and the key to the Snape vault? You only left me with my child signet ring!”

Sirius shrugged a gesture which seemed to enrage Snape all the more. Curses would have flown had not Albus stepped him, breaking the dark curiosity that had had everyone in the Hall watching the exchange.



“Sirius, Severus, if you would act your age, we do not have time for this. You’ll settle your grievance once this war is over. For now we need to stand together. Harry’s departure, no matter how detrimental to us it is, can’t be avoided. We need to put new protection on the school and our other strongholds. Reports were also received from France and Germany...”

Sirius seemed incensed at this, but was beat to it by Molly.

“Albus, you mean you’ll let Harry leave? Alone with Them?”

The Headmaster smiled sadly at the Weasley’s matriarch.

“I can’t stop him from following his path Molly.”

“But, he’s a child! It’s already bad enough that he has to fight You-Know-Who and you’ll let him enter another battle?”

“Do you think I could stop him, Molly?”

“He’ll get himself killed!” she nearly screeched.

Moody snorted.

“Not from what I heard. That boy was trained to fight, just look at him... Now that’s what I call a good training...”

Sirius looked at Dumbledore.

“How can you let him leave us, Albus? We need him here, not with them.”

The headmasters shook his head.

“I can’t interfere with riders business, and I don’t want to. Accept this for Harry’s sake, Sirius, or you’ll lose him. You can’t ask him to fight Voldemort and put him under lock the rest of the time.”

There was a slow clapping and everyone turned to see Helion standing in the entrance. He raised his eyebrows.

“Apparently you learnt something, Wizard.” He said blankly.



The Headmaster's eyes twinkled slightly.

"I think we all have things to learn, Elemental."

At his side, he heard Minerva mutter.

"It's not like the office could have survived another onslaught..."

The Elemental nodded sharply.

"We will start the preparations for a portal back to Horevald. Do not go to the pitch unless we say so, this place is so saturated with Magic that the anchoring will be difficult."

Without waiting for an answer, he left the hall, the three others on his heels.

Sirius was seething but managed to restrained himself. Standing up, he stormed out of the room, Remus following after shooting an apologetic look at the others.

With a sigh, Dumbledore, gathered the papers strewn before him and ask Severus to give his report.

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Meanwhile, Harry had gone to the room of requirement. He knew he would find Ron and Hermione there. They deserved to know he was going, he only hoped they would take it better than his godfather. He squashed the hurt Sirius' words had done to him. He wasn't going to think of it. Sirius would understand he had to do this.

He paced three times in front of the door and stepped in as soon as the door appeared.

People were duelling each other, with and without their wands. Others were working on their aims on moving targets. Some were repeating the wand movements of a shield charms or going through training sessions: sending harmless jinx at each other, varying the power put behind it. He noticed Hermione teaching a group of fourth year and Ron duelling a Ravenclaw sixth year.



He walked toward them, noticing the silence that was settling in the room.

“Hermione, Ron, I need to talk to you alone, please...”

The brown-haired witch nodded and signalled her students to practice the shield they had been working on. Ron sent a strong blasting curse at his opponent, ending the duel as he was thrown back as Ron summoned his wand.

Harry motioned them to follow him to a corner of the room and he erected the strongest privacy and silencing charm he could think of.

He stared at the both of them.

“I was called to Horevald. I’m leaving in an hour.”

“What!” Ron and Hermione gaped at him, disbelieving.

“What are you on, Harry!” yelled his friend. “You can’t leave!”

Harry sighed.

“I have to... The Queen asks for me and I’m oath bound to answer a call for help. I told you so before.”

Ron was turning a strange shade of crimson which clashed with his hair.

“I thought that that elf was already there! They hate humans, why would they want you there!”

Hermione nodded, apparently wondering the same thing. She was pale and was looking at him with wide eyes.

“Both Athars are needed to stop what is going on there... Lots of people will die if I don’t...”

“Lots of people will die here if you leave! Do you think Voldemort will wait for your return to strike?”

Ron shook his head, a bitter expression etched on his face.



"I can't believe you're abandoning us, Harry! Why are you jumping at their every order?"

Harry gritted his teeth.

"I do this because I decided to, Ron, not because they asked for it."

Hermione put a hand on her red-head friend's arm.

"Calm down, Ron, you need to think about this clearly..." She turned towards Harry. "How long are you going to be gone?"

The Athar sighed.

"I don't know... it could be months..."

This seemed to set off Ron again.

"WHAT! Are you mad?"

"Ron.."

"Don't Ron me, Harry!"

"You have to understand."

The red head was clearly angry.

"No, I don't."

Hermione was frowning.

"I don't either Harry. We know what they think of us. Do you think your help will be welcomed there?"

"That's not the point, I have to help."

"Bullshit Harry!" yelled Ron. "You don't need to. What difference will you make there?"

His other best friend nodded slowly.



“Ron has a point Harry. And we do need you here.”

Harry shook his head.

“Not really, you did a great job without me...”

“But what about Voldemort, Harry? He’s not going to wait for you to come back. He will attack.” Ron was pacing, punctuating his words with moves of his hands.

“The headmaster gathered many strong wizards under his lead. I’m not as necessary as you seem to think I am...”

Ron shook his head.

“I don’t really see why you must leave, you’ll be only one more fighter and most of them can’t stand humans...”

Harry sat on a chair.

“I’m an Athar, Ron, and I didn’t show you all of what I learnt there.”

Hermione nodded.

“Surprise effect...”

Harry shrugged.

“Not that it would mean anything. Someone recognized what I was during the attack on Gringotts.”

Ron sent him an obviously annoyed look while Hermione eyed him curiously.

“What kind of abilities did you hide?”

Harry tilted his head a bit, considering the questions while erecting an obscuring ward around them on top of the privacy ones.

“Don’t you trust us?” snapped Ron, oblivious to what Harry had done.

Harry rolled his eyes.



“I do, Ron, it’s not about trust it’s more about your reaction...”

The red head didn’t seem to be convinced and was about to voice it when Harry waved his hand and a stone appeared in the air, floating in front of Hermione.

“You’ll be able to use this to contact me at any time.”

Nodding shakily, Hermione took the stone, nearly dropping it as it was slightly warm to the touch.

Ron had a blank expression as he looked with hard eyes at the stone.

With a small flick of his wrist, Harry cast the strongest magic dampeners he knew. Only then, he started to let his power flow freely while he flared his Elemental aura.

Blue flames shot up, forming a flickering halo around his body. They were tamed and calm, but you could feel the power reeking from them.

He closed his eyes, centering himself. Opening them, he heard his friends’ gasp. He knew how he looked like, Freaky. Teneb had once told him that his eyes were literally glowing and that his magic was flowing around him, blowing his hair, and making his white strand stand out even more. He could feel the warmth of his Athar mark on his temple.

He looked at Hermione and Ron before lowering his magical levels and making his aura fade.

“Bloody Hell...” Ron was starrng at him. “Why is it always you?” he muttered those last words in a barely audible whisper that Harry chose to ignore.

“Teneb needs me back there... They need me...”

Ron curled his hands into tight fists, his knuckles white.

“Then go back to him! And don’t bother to come back, we’ll manage without you.”



He walked out of the room, followed by everyone's eyes as most of the students had by now stopped working and had been trying to see or heard what was going on. Both Hermione and Harry winced at the loud sound of a slamming door.

"He will get over it, Harry," said Hermione. "He changed a lot while you were gone, but with you back, he allows himself to fall back to his old self... I- "

Harry sighed.

"Forget it, Hermione, I expected it, anyway."

The young woman looked at him sadly.

"You always had a hero-complex... I suppose there's no talking you out of it, is it?"

Harry shook his head, to his friend's distress.

The Gryffindor sighed.

"Just come back as soon as you can. Despite whatever you might think, we do need you by our side."

Harry's green eyes were blazing and Hermione barely refrained from shuddering. Never before had Harry looked the powerful savior he had been heralded as. For the first time in her life, she was scared of her best friend, scared of what he could do and scared for him.

With a few more words, they parted ways, Hermione going back to the Junior Order's training, Harry to his room to get ready.

An hour later he was done, having checked over his bags twice to be sure he had everything he needed. He had even been to the Hospital Wing and had asked for some potions he thought would be helpful: Skelegrow, Energizing, Calming, Dreamless Sleep potions and basic healing ones.



Pomfrey had not been able to hand him a lot, needing them for her patients, but it would be enough to care of the injuries he might sustain and allow him to seek an healer.

He shrunk the bags and put them in his pocket, before making his way out of the castle. Neither Ron nor Hermione were waiting for him, but he hadn't expected them to do so.

He spotted Dumbledore and Remus waiting for him in the hall, apparently waiting for him. However, he didn't want to say good bye.

Spotting an opened window, he transformed swiftly into his raven's form and flew to the Quidditch pitch, landing in the stands, not wishing to distract the four elementals working on the portal's opening.

He sent a tendril of magic towards the swirling energies and frowned.

The flows were disturbed, agitated and extremely unstable.

He made his way towards Shadows' paddock and readied him. He had decided to leave Lucky there, not wishing to endanger the small beast that was way too curious for its own good.

When he came back to the pitch, the portal was nearly opened but he really didn't feel like passing through it... the energies were wavering greatly.

Steeling himself for a rough ride, he took Shadow's reins and started to direct his horse towards the swirling opening.

"May Lunai and Solyen light your path," said someone behind him.

Startled slightly, Harry turned his head and frowned upon seeing Lienhor observing him from a distance. He nodded back.

"May they shine on you and bless your path."

Lienhor nodded, before turning his back on the young wizard and heading for the paddock.



Harry focused his attention back on the portal and urged Shadow forwards. The stallion was quite reluctant at having to step through the portal, but Harry kept pushing him and encouraging him.

As he was about to pass, he shot the Elementals a look.

The four of them were sweating from the strain of holding the portal open. Helion nodded shortly.

“Go, Athar.”

He dragged Shadow with him and thought he heard his name yelled behind him.

He turned his head slightly and saw Ron and Hermione running towards the pitch. With a sigh he walked through the swirling energies and let himself be swept away.

The ride was rough, he was shaken quite a lot and many times, he felt the energies trying to dissolve around him. He finally was sprawled to the ground and heard a pained and protesting neigh from his stallion.

His mount had been flung to the side and was now trying to get up.

Immediately, Harry rushed to its sides and started to check the horse for injuries.

Fortunately there had been no real damage. He looked around, noticing that he had arrived at the same location as the one he had arrived the last time he had come here for the allegiance ceremonies.

He heard galloping horses coming his way and unsheathed his sword.

He knew little of the situation at Horevald, besides what Terio and Arxeren had told him, as well as what he had read of the reports Teneb had got before his departure.

Relief flooded him as he saw two Eldoiras as well as a Herald coming his way.



He sheathed back his blade and finished his check on Shadow, adjusting its tack. The herald and its escort stopped a few meters away from him as he climbed on Shadow's back. He was aware of the picture he made: clad in blood red, riding a black stallion and heavily armed.

"Athar," saluted the Elf, bowing as well as he could while sitting on a horse, "May Lunai and Solyen guide your steps."

Harry nodded back.

"And yours."

The Herald nodded his appraisal.

"You are expected at the castle as soon as possible."

Harry gathered his reins.

"Lead the way."

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They rode to a quick pace back to the royal palace, and Harry couldn't miss the signs of an upcoming war: soldiers were patrolling, villages were evacuated and defences lines were being set up. Many wards had been erected. Nobody spoke as they neared the castle.

Harry climbed off his mount, ignoring the looks sent his way. He knew how he looked and didn't care what other might think of him. Only the opinion of those who cared for him was important.

With a smile, he handed Shadow's reins to Erin. The elf teen nodded seriously, petting gently the forehead of the stallion. Knowing there wouldn't be problems between the two; Harry checked his sword and followed the Herald inside the palace.

The place was as magnificent as before, though the atmosphere was darker and tense. He was led to the audience room and waited outside as the Herald announced his arrival.



Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath; he would need all his patience while staying here.

Finally the doors opened and he stepped in, immediately taking in his surroundings.

The room was fairly large: Huge windows lightened it and several paintings and tapestries were hung on the walls. A large oblong table was placed in the middle, covered with a big map of the different elvish places. Queen Valera was sitting on one hand, Doryan, and Celen at her sides; then there was Demenor, Reald, the Xhan and the Xhana, Djaryle, as well as several other elves, Magis and Elementals. Harry smiled as he spotted his blood brother sitting at Celen's right. Teneb looked exhausted, heavy bags were hanging under his eyes and Harry could nearly feel the weariness radiating from him.

All of them had looked up as he entered and where appraising him.

"Athar Harry, welcome back to Horevald," finally said Valera.

Harry nodded back at her and Celen.

"Thank you, I came upon receiving your message."

The Queen acknowledged his answer and motioned to him to sit down on the empty seat by Teneb.

"We'll make a brief review of our situation, Athar."

She snapped her fingers and immediately colored lights started to appear on the map.

"Gerian, Duke of Meyan, controls this region. He raided the temples and managed to get hold of two pentacles of power stones and gathered two circles to use them."

Harry narrowed his eyes.

"He then asked for Keis, Lyn and Jiya's support, but though the High Duchess Cerelia disagreed with some of my choices, she wanted no



part in a coup against the Royals. Gerian started to drain the islands' magic centers in retaliation."

The young wizard massaged his temples. Idiot. Did that imbecilic worm realized what he had done! Valera continued her summary of the situation.

"As you can guess, the archipel is currently highly unstable. A few minor earthquakes already took place, and there was, fortunately, no casualties. Heralds were sent to warn the population and ready everything for their evacuation. The problem is that Gerian managed to get support from quite a lot of people here. A few attacks had been already led against the castle and several villages were raided. For now, there was no casualty. Gerian want people to agree with him and he won't get support if he starts killing left and right..."

She was cut abruptly as a knock on the door broke her explanations.

A battered herald entered. His clothes were singed and he was sporting several cuts on his arms, neck and face. He bowed his head to the Queen.

"Your Majesty, reinforcements needs to be sent to Hiolan. The town is under attack and the defences won't hold much longer..." His voice was filled with urgency.

Valera didn't waste time in useless questioning. She nodded to an elf that left the room hurriedly. Teneb had risen after shooting Demenor a look.

He signalled to Harry to follow him, only to realize his blood brother was already up and ready.

They both exited the room.

"I'm glad you're here, Harry." He finally said letting Harry feel his relief through their bond.

Harry looked at him with worried eyes.

"Are things that bad?"



Teneb sighed, racking his hands through his hair as they reached the stables, ignoring the looks they gathered. Soldiers were already waiting in the yard, checking their weapons one last time.

“You’ll see for yourself. Watch my back, and I’ll watch yours.”

Harry nodded.

“You didn’t need to ask.”

Teneb smiled and took Myst from the stable boy, jumping on it. Harry thanked Erin as the boy handed him Shadow’s reins. He climbed fluidly on the stallion, readjusting his stirrups. Glancing at Teneb, he signalled he was ready. One of the permanent portals had been opened, since the magical disturbances were not affecting them yet. Nodding, Teneb tightened his legs around his horse’s flanks, spurring his mount forwards, Harry immediately coming to his sides.

The travel was smoother than the one Harry had to endure to come to Horevald as they appeared in a vast plain which the closest spot accessible through permanent portals to Hiolan.

They wasted no time as they galloped towards the village which had been attacked. Harry felt his heart tightened as he took in the state of the kingdom. Where flourishing fields and orchards had once been, little remained. They passed through deserted villages or ruins. Cries could be heard as they neared the raiders’ target. Unsheathing his sword, Harry heard Teneb’s warning in his head.

*Careful Harry, do not kill them, only incapacitated them.*

He nodded, placing a charm to prevent the blade from cutting on his sword as they charged. Seeing the Queen’s soldiers arriving, most of the raiders choose to retreat, taking their bounty with them: some gold and gems but mostly food, clothes, weapons and healing remedies.

Dismissing any idea of pursuit, Harry climbed off, and immediately started to look for injuries. He could do little when it came to deep wounds, but knew enough medimagic to take care of the lesser wounds, signalling the more serious ones to Teneb.



There hadn't been life threatening injuries, though, several people would have to have several bones straightened and mended. The deepest gashes had been taken care of immediately by those with healing abilities and Harry soon let those more qualified for it take care of the wounded, while he joined the group securing the area. He spread his magic, trying to sense the people still around. Frowning, he started to walk quickly towards a pile of rubble, raising his hand; he started to push the stones away. Why waste some of his energy when he could do it the muggle way easily?

A few elves joined him. The soldiers who had come with them were part of the Queen personal guard and were faithful to her and Celen. There hadn't been a word against Harry for the whole ride, something the young wizard was grateful for. Harry accelerated the process, sensing that whatever was sending the signal was weakening quickly.

"Stand back," he finally said. Raising his hand, he whispered the levitation charm, sending the rubbles away. Soon a figure appeared. It was a male who seemed curled around something or someone.

"Sildar!"

An Elf-woman pushed Harry aside, rushing at the elf side.

*Teneb, Come here, quick!*

Seconds later, his friend was at his side.

"What's the matter, Harry?"

"You need to heal him; he's weakening by the minute..."

Harry felt Teneb do a quick scan and ignored the cursing that followed.

"Anchor me, and for Solyen's sake, be gentle..."

Rolling his eyes, Harry entered a very light trance, enough for what was needed but not to become completely unaware of his surroundings. He caught the tendril of magic Teneb sent him, trying to be as smooth as possible and anchored it to him. Once it was done,



he reversed the magic current, feeding Teneb some energy. He observed as the other Athar slowly wormed his way in this Sildar's body and started to work on the damage made... He winced as he realized it was a swelling in the brain as well as several broken bones. Those types of wounds were a pain... or so Teneb always said...

He just kept the flow of energy steady, a bit bored, but knowing that he couldn't help in any other way.

Suddenly he sensed something at the edges of his senses' range. He had not time to ponder on this as he whirled on his heels and raised both his hand, raising a shield dome over the area, in a five-metre range. The magic was called so quickly that a crack was heard. Having no time for subtlety, Harry sent a burst of power straight to the source of the curse. A cry of pain was heard as Teneb slowly emerged from his trance, looking at Harry.

"I did what I could, but he'll need a healer as fast as possible, I reduced the swelling and stabilized him as good as I could. What did you do, I sensed a burst in your magic..."

Harry smiled grimly.

"Someone tried to curse you, which is surprising, I was expecting an attack on my person, after all, I'm just human, while you're as pure as an Elf can be and the son of the Queen Advisor, as well as Athar..."

"What kind of curse?"

Harry shrugged.

"No idea, I just sent him a blast in retaliation after I created a shield... The guy must be somewhere, over there." He pointed to the area behind Teneb. The Elf nodded and stalked in this direction, while Harry looked around. Half of the village was destroyed; most of the houses had been ransacked. The fields behind the village were burning, making Harry snarled as he stalked in this direction. So they wanted to starve the Queen and those faithful to her.

Raising his hand, he clenched his hand and brought it down. The fires flickered for a few seconds before resuming their burning.



Frowning, Harry sent a tendril of his elemental magic in the blazing flames. He tilted his head as the magic seemed to pool itself to something on the ground. Flaring up his Elemental aura, He stepped in the fire and walked to this something.

It was a small ruby, as big as a thumb nail but radiating with magic. With a sigh he sent a blast of raw magic, overloading the stone in a matter of seconds. He then used his own elemental abilities and seconds later, the flames had completely died. He walked over the burnt area, making sure no embers were hot enough to start a fire again. Most of the fields were destroyed. Ashes were flying in his wake. Suddenly as he was in the middle of a field which had to have been a corn-field, flames burst above him, circling him, smoke surrounding him and filling his throat, making his eyes ache and his throat hurt like hell.

Anger rising in him, he raised his hands once more and poured his mounting rage and helplessness into his elemental command. He had to leave his world to come here, and he was damned if he was going to let some idiot kill him using the very element that was his.

Blue flames surrounded his body and the fires around him disappeared in a snap of fingers as Harry pushed the power sustaining them back to its origin.

After all people who play with fire usually get their fingers burnt, hadn't his or her mother told whoever thought he or she could tell him that?

Breathing slowly, he calmed down and walked to the one who had been summoning those fires.

It was a fire Elemental, that was a given.... Who else had bronze skin, blood red hair and red eyes in this world? With a wave of his hand, the man was bound tightly and his burns dressed.

He floated him towards the others, teeth gritted.

Teneb gave him a strained smile.



“Thanks for stopping those fires... The elementals have usually a hard time putting them out since they seem to be anchored when they arrive.”

“They are.” He handed Teneb the ruby, while tilting his head toward the unconscious form of the Elemental. “He’s still alive. He was the one fuelling the fires.”

A ice-cold glint appeared in Teneb’s eyes. We’ll bring him back to Horevald where he will be questioned.” His tone held a final edge and no one tried to dispute his decision.

They stayed a few more hours at the village, helping rebuild the house and gathering enough food and first aid necessities for the inhabitants to get back on their feet.

Sildar was sent to the closest temple where the priests would take care of him.

Harry stared at what the elf had nearly died for. It was a clear, transparent bluish stone. It was as big as his fist and the cuts had been roughly done, but he could sense the power flows in it.

Sildar had been the village’s stone’s guardian. He held the duty to protect and take care of the stone and he had laid his life on the line to do so.

He turned the stone in his hand trying to understand how it worked. This one was small so he was not in any kind of danger while holding it. From what Teneb had told him, those stone were some kind of magic regulators. It stabilized it and made the magic flowing in the grounds and all around them useable. It also could store it, acting like a reserve pool in which the villagers could tap should the circumstances ask for it.

The stone had not suffered from the raid, Harry could feel it slightly humming in his hand, and handed it back to Teneb, nodding.

“It’s good.”



Out of the two of them, he was the one who had the strongest sensitivity to Magic.

“Alright,” Teneb walked to Sildar’s house that was standing once more, like nothing had ever happened. He entered, followed by Harry, and placed the stone back in its place, on Sildar’s bonded indication. As the guardian as no longer here, its assistant, a forty year-old apprentice would act in his place for the duration of his absence. As a precaution, Harry and Teneb combined their magic to create a shield that no elf, magis or elemental could break, since human magic had been woven in it.

“We need to go back to Horevald,” stated Teneb.

Harry looked at the people surrounding them. Most of them were weary or in shock at what had happened. He looked to the sky. Dusk was nearing as the sun was about to reach the horizon.

An old Elf, even by their standards approached them. His white hair reached his waist and was carefully braided, he was wearing a silvery grey tunic over blue pants and a torque was resting on his chest, the stone embedded in its center shining quietly in the sun rays.

“You and your men are welcomed to stay here for the night.”

Teneb sighed and nodded.

“Thank you, Elder for your offer, but we don’t want to impose in this dire time.”

The Elf smiled.

“This is the least we can do for our defenders.”

Thanking the Elder again, Teneb signalled to the soldiers that they were resting for the night, something which was apparently appreciated. However, a fourth of them would be on guard for a part of the night, being replaced every two hours.



Harry took care of his horse, checking him for any injuries, brushing and feeding him, he combed his mane carefully petting the stallion's neck at the same time and chasing the occasional fly.

Meanwhile, the villagers had approached the soldiers, offering them to stay in their house for the night as well as chatting quietly, asking for news of other villages. Apparently, it had been decided that every inhabitant would house at least one soldier.

It didn't come as a surprise to Harry when no one approached him. Watching as elves started to guide their hosts away, he couldn't suppress a bubble of resentment from rising to the surface. He quickly squashed it. He had known nothing would change... With a weary sigh, he led Shadow to a quieter place and placed his saddle against a tree. That would do for the night. Casting a softening charm on the leather and conjuring a cover, he tried to settle as comfortably as possible. He would be part of the last shift, so he cast another charm to wake himself on time.

Lying on the grass, he listened as people talked and even laughed a little, his heart tightening as it only reminded him of his solitude in this world which did not want him...

Why had he come here?

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Teneb accepted as the Elder offered him to stay in his house. He talked a bit with the man, looking around at the same time for his friend.

Finally spotting him with his horse, he reported his attention back to the Elder Trahl. However, as elves approached the soldiers to offer them to stay at their house, he noticed that no one headed toward Harry, on the opposite; they seemed to avoid even looking in his direction. He felt a flash of resentment pass through their bond, followed immediately by weariness. Looking up, he saw that Harry was gone.

He turned towards Trahl.



“Please, excuse me, Elder Trahl, but could you tell me where the other Athar is staying for the night?”

The elf seemed embarrassed.

“The human?”

Teneb nodded.

“Well... you must understand that you can’t change people’s opinion that quickly, young Athar.” He said quietly.

The Athar eyed him, before nodding tiredly.

“It appears so, Elder.” There was a few-second pause. “Please, apologize on my behalf to your bonded for my absence this evening. My blood-brother and I have much to discuss.”

Bowing a little, he parted from Trahl’s company and looked for Harry.

He found him quickly, and sat at his side.

“You can’t force people to change, Teneb,” finally said Harry, “so don’t feel guilty for their actions.”

“But you came here to help them; you saved this Sildar’s life today. I hadn’t sensed him, if it hadn’t been for you, we would have only found a corpse...”

“And in their mind, I’m the one responsible for this fight.”

Teneb leaned against the tree.

“This would have happened sooner or later, Harry, your presence just accelerated things.” Seeing he would not convince his friend, he decided to let the matter rest. “You should rest; the coming times are going to be hard on us.”

The elf summoned his own saddle and conjured another cover, settling himself not far from his friend. Both of them were on the same shift in the morning. They said nothing as they heard whoever had been listening to their talk step away.



Harry was woken up abruptly by his charm and after shaking Teneb awake, he got up and changed to a spare set of clothes. He then returned to his sleeping place and was surprised to find a plate filled with fruits and a piece of bread.

“Teneb?”

“Yes?”

“People from the village brought you some food.”

Teneb walked to him, brows furrowed.

“That’s not for me, I already got some.” To prove his point, he took a bite of the piece of bread he had in his hand. “They must have brought it for you...” he said; smiling a little as Harry starred at the plate suspiciously. “Are you going to eat it, it would be a shame to let it go to waste...”

Nodding, Harry slowly took it and started to eat.

They were ready and went to release the on-guard soldiers from their duty.

As they waited for the dawn, they decided to play a little game. Both of them would create small creatures with their elements and then have them fight.

Finally, it was time to leave. Apparently the raiders had decided that attacking again was not the wisest thing to do. Harry walked to his stallion, getting him ready for their ride back to Horevald. Adjusting the saddle carefully, he then put the bridle on. After a last check, he walked the horse towards the others, the plate which had held the food in his other hand. Handing the reins to Teneb he approached the Elder, handing him the plate back.

“Thank whoever was generous enough to spare me some food. His or her gesture was appreciated.” Bowing, he turned back, missing the surprised and appraising look Trahl sent his way.



Caressing Shadow's head, he jumped on the stallion's back and adjusted his reins, readying for a long ride.

Teneb motioned them forwards and they trotted away from the village.

The journey back was silent. They stopped a few times to allow their mounts to drink a little but most of them were eager to be back. Harry took in Arthania's landscapes for the first time. The land where Horevald had been built was on the largest of the islands used by the elves, Magis and Elementals. The Northern side was the mountain part, or so Teneb had said. A large plain stretched from there to the Southern side, where Horevald had been built. There were two huge forests, one at the foot of the mountains in the North, the other on the western coast. Holian, the raided village had not been far from this forest. Horevald was situated in the southern-western part of Arthania, at an eight hour ride from the forest and a half-an-hour ride from the sea. One of the main rivers, the Eluana passed close to the King's city, many streams joining it on its way from the mountains to the sea. Harry was fascinated with the luxurious grass, pickled with flowers of all kinds and colors. The land in this area was mostly flat, but had a few hills. The different communities had all worked to build the paths connecting the villages and various towns. The air was clear from the pollution that seemed to be a permanent fix in the Muggle world.

As they passed a few villages, Harry realized that the different races had developed their societies on magical tools, relying very little on technology only, unless it was coupled with magic; He smiled as he saw two elves picking apples from trees. The two of them were standing on the ground, directing magicked metallic things that neatly cut the apples from the branches. A bit further, kids were playing with a twisting toy which seemed to spit fireworks at odd times...

The sun was shining brightly, as it had done for the past few weeks, and they were creating clouds of dust on their way. Harry shifted, grateful that his guardian had told him to weave a charm to prevent his clothes from being too warm or not enough...

Finally, Horevald came into view and Harry couldn't help but notice that the horses were cantering a bit faster and that the men seemed more joyous.



They left their mounts in the yard. The soldiers went back to their barracks, Teneb and Harry to their rooms. They passed many courtiers, servants as the castle was bubbling with activity at this hour. Finally they reached their quarters.

Teneb had told Harry he had been given a suite right next to his own. They entered Harry's room, locking the door behind them.

Harry slumped on his bed, crossing his arms behind his head.

"Alright, Harry?"

"I could ask you the same question; you look like death warmed over."

Teneb grimaced.

"Thank for pointing it out... It's been hectic here, but for now, we don't have casualties. Gerian is bidding his time..."

"Then, why ask me to come back!" asked Harry, resentment, seeping in his tone.

Teneb let himself fall next to his blood brother.

"We need you here, Harry. Valera and her close council did not tell everyone the full truth."

Harry raised an eyebrow.

"How so?"

"You know that Gerian has been playing with power stones?" Seeing Harry nodding, he continued. "This idiot drained Keis, Lyn and Jiya's lands dry. There is barely enough magic left there to keep the islands above sea level."

"Why aren't you evacuating the area then?"

Teneb stood up sharply.



“What do you think, Harry? Of course we want people to leave these places but Gerian has blocked every means of communication, except for Dragon travels.”

There was a small silence.

“So, what’s the plan then?” said Harry, peering at Teneb.

The elf sat back on the bed.

“Should things turn to worse, Dragons will be sent to evacuate the islands. But unless we have proof of an attack commanded by the High Duke against us, or unless we receive a war declaration, we can’t send Dragon wings as it would be perceived as an aggressive move and a threat. If the islands start sinking, there will be little we’ll be able to do, but hope to save as many people as possible...”

Silence stretched in the room following the elf’s explanation. It was broken by soft chimes.

“Dinner will be served in ten minutes,” Teneb announced, getting up and casting a cleaning and straightening charm on his clothes.

He looked at Harry, eyeing his rumpled Athar uniform.

“I’ll have the tailors sent you some clothes, since I assume you took the barest necessities with you?”

Harry nodded, imitating his friend’s actions.

“Thanks.”

Teneb waved it away.

“Do not concern yourself with this. Just one thing, Harry... Always wear your Athar clothes. They need to understand your status and the more visual, the better.”

Showing his understanding, Harry smiled a little.

“You just want to show off.”



Teneb brought his hand to his heart, chuckling.

Composing themselves, the two young men headed for the dining rooms, their blood red cloaks flying behind them, catching many eyes on their way.

They entered the rooms and seated themselves, well, Teneb sat and Harry guessed from the look of it that he was supposed to sit between Demenor and Djaryle.

He sent a small smile to the female elf, nodding to Demenor, Opheria and Kobalt as he spotted them down the table.

The dinner was a quiet affair, nobody daring to speak up aside from making some small talk with their close neighbours.

Growing extremely uncomfortable and feeling people starring at him the moment he looked away from them, Harry excused himself as soon as it was possible and walked straight back to his room. Locking his door behind him, he slid against it, massaging his temples.

If his headache was anything to go by, the coming days would be hell... He felt the scale Rexeran had given him months ago heat up against his skin and relish in the warmth emanating from it.

Reinvigorated through his bond with his dragon, he changed and went to bed. No point in tiring himself about this...

The following week was spent in the same pattern. They would be called from time to time to try to stop a raid, usually arriving too late to do more than helping people to rebuild... The Elemental they had caught had been joined by a few others, until the raiders decided to cut their loses and stopped setting fires to the fields, none of those sent with the raiders had been a match to Harry, but the young suspect that they weren't risking their better Element wielders for simple raids.

When he wasn't riding to attacked villages, he was locked in a room with Teneb, Celen, Demenor and a few other people, trying to come up with plan, defence strategy, ways to evacuate the inhabitants of the main town, should things come to worse. Aside from that, Harry



spent what little time he had training himself. Valera had showed him a room for his practice and he was working his stallion at dawn, ignoring the other soldiers or trainers there as they worked the army's horses.

He was working himself to his limits so that he didn't think about his friends and what might happen to them that was how Demenor and Teneb found him. He was sparring with a practice dummy and being thoroughly crushed. Sweating profusely, he dodged a foot and retaliated with his own attack, only to be blocked. Disengaging himself, he circled the dummy, trying to find a weak point in its guard. Growing fed up with it, he launched a last resort attack, only to be blocked and blasted to the ground.

Teneb chuckled good naturedly upon seeing Harry's frustrated glare.

"Don't laugh Teneb, unless you want to have a go at it too...." he snapped, bracing himself back to his feet.

The elf only laughed more at this, before finally managing to rein in his hilarity.

"Sorry, Harry..."

The wizard snorted.

"Sure you are..." He turned to Demenor. "Why are you here, I assume it is not out of seeking the pleasure of my company."

The older rider shook his head.

"No, I need to talk to you and Teneb at the Headquarters. Your dragons are waiting for you in the courtyard."

This immediately caught Harry's attention. With a wave of his hand, his dummies were dispelled and his clothes straightened.

"Let's not keep them waiting then."

The three riders headed out in silent, though Harry did not miss the glances Demenor kept on shooting his way. He couldn't repress a full



smile from spreading on his face as he all but ran to Rexeran, pressing his forehead to the dragon's head.

We were parted for too long, Astyan...

Harry looked in the rainbow colored eyes.

"But this was needed," he said, realizing that yes, this had been necessary.

It was.

Sending a last affective thought through the link bonding rider to his dragon, he easily climbed on Rexeran's back, leaning against the neck as the Sowaroc leapt in the air, Gae and Demenor's Azurean behind them. With a flash, they appeared over the Headquarters.

Harry starred stonily at the place he had vowed to never return, Proof that you should never say never. It hadn't changed, except for the fact that the place was swarming with Dragons and riders.

"All the riders were called back," said Teneb, from Gae's back, sensing his friend's question. "Only messengers remained behind, encase we are needed..."

Harry nodded, gripping, one of Rexeran's scale as the Sowaroc dove for the ground, landing smoothly, and paying no heed to the eyes he could feel fixed on him.

Climbing back, he hugged the golden, scaly neck, drawing strength from Rexeran's support. He pulled back; steeling himself for what he expected would be a difficult talk.

Demenor led them to what was obviously his office, motioning to them to take the seats in front of his desk. He folded his hands and looked at the two young Athars, once more regretting what they had endured during their stay among them. Such potential... such power...

"Let's drop pretence here. You both know that no matter what Valera and Celen will do, the war is unavoidable. The Queen's position regarding the human world will not be accepted without a fight."



He looked at Harry.

“Though you were the catalyst of this, these changes are needed, I’m starting to see it and I’m sure that with time others will.”

Harry crossed his arm over his chest.

“But we don’t have time, I’m not going to wait until your people get their head out of their arses and realize that no, they’re not above being destroyed, simply because they think so!”

Demenor hold his hand.

“The riders have never been involved in a war, not as fighters. Never since the Great Wars were we the attackers... but I fear this won’t be the case. Even the Xhan and the Xhana have agreed to lend their Eldoiras to the Queen should the need arise.”

Both Harry and Teneb nodded.

“However, you two are now Athars and bonded to Elders. You will be expected to lead our forces, helped with the former Athars.”

Harry shot a disbelieving look at the leader of the Headquarters.

“Sorry, but I can’t believe that. Most of the riders here would rather rot than following me to battle.”

Demenor frowned.

“I didn’t sit idle while you were away to your world, Athar. I said there would be changes, and there were. The Dragons didn’t let us have a choice.”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“You’ll excuse me if I find this difficult to believe.”

Demenor shrugged.

“You are entitled to your own opinion. The riders Opheria and Kobalt were at the center of those changes. They managed to rally several



riders, mostly among the younger generations to them, helped by their bonded. Now I need to ask you if you will fight with us or not. I cannot force you, but without the full Athar's powers, Darkana's powers will be quite reduced."

*I will explain later*, sent Teneb through their bond.

Harry looked into Demenor's eyes.

"I did not come here to play cards."

Demenor's gaze was serious as he nodded.

"Indeed you did not. I ask you to stay at the Headquarters for the week, to train with the other riders. Choose your own wing among those non-affiliated to other Athars. There will be those who will take charge when you won't be able to do so."

The two youths nodded.

"I know I have little right to ask this of you after I lacked in my duty as mentor and leader of these Headquarters, but we will need to trust each other in order to go through the times to come."

Harry stiffened and stood up.

"I will help you and work with you, but don't ask me to trust you. You will have a lot to do before you gain that right."

Demenor nodded, having expected such an answer.

"Could you at least get rid of your enchantment over the building and on some of the riders?"

Harry smirked, remembering his little departing gift.

He had found it fitting. Every room in the building had been charmed so that all those inside its walls would appear human to the others and wearing the most outrageous outfits possible. Every riders that had ever abused him, psychologically or physically had also been hit with a nasty little curse he had created specially for them. Every time



they felt asleep, they would dream of the human world, seeing things through human's eyes...

There had been a few other prank hexes set up, but their effects should have lasted at most a week. Skin and hair coloring charms, nose, nails and ears lengthening curses, voices modifiers, transfiguration spells, to make the riders rabbits, geese, pigs, sheep, goats, toads for a few hours...

Arxeren had let him see some of it and Teneb had gotten a good laugh out of it.

Shaking his head, Harry concentrated on the threads of magic he had weaved in the wards with Teneb's help. Slowly, he delicately dissipated them.

"Done."

Demenor nodded at him, standing up.

"You will be needed to power up Darkana's core, as did every previous Athar before you. The Xhan and the Xhana will explain what will be asked of you." He shuffled his paper. "On other matters, you have been put into adjacent rooms on the third level, fourth and fifth doors."

The two young men nodded and exited Demenor's office, heading for their quarters.

"What's this about, Teneb?"

The elf turned to him.

"Rexeran must have mentioned this to you once at least... You remember Darkana?"

"That's the place where the ceremony just before the bonding took place, right?"

Teneb nodded.



“Yes, it is the power center of this place and a huge part of the wards and the veil that keeps these lands hidden and safe. The Dragons fuelled some of their powers in them too, which when added to Elvish, Magis and Elemental energies make an incredible amount of power.”

Harry motioned for him to go on.

“The Athars are chosen to represent the riders. They are usually the more powerful riders. Their blood is needed as a vessel for the Dragon’s energies. Without it, they can’t mix with ours without risks.”

Harry nodded in understanding.

“Alright then.”

He strode towards the fifth door as they had just finished climbing the flight of stairs up to the third story. It was a fairly big room with a bed, a desk, two cupboards, a wardrobe and a couch which looked inviting. A large window with a view on the paddocks lightened the whole place.

“Nice.”

“The bathroom is a communal one, at the end of the corridor, as usual.”

Harry shuddered. This brought back memories to him. He had positively hated having to shower with the other Daryns, and after a month had taken to do it at times when it was empty.

Teneb sat on the bed.

“It won’t be like before. You’re one of them. They can’t deny that. So lift your chin up, and go down there knowing you are their better.”

Harry sent him a small smile.

“Arrogant, aren’t we?”

Teneb laughed, throwing his friend the closest pillow he put his hand on.



Twenty minutes later, having straightened themselves, they made their way towards the Headquarters stores. After an uncomfortable hour of measurements and trying on clothes, the young wizard left with some pants, tunics, two belts, another pair of boots, a comfortable leather outfit for outdoors missions, one cloaks and some underwear. Teneb had written his mother to get him clothes for balls, reception, meeting and other occasions... After all, he couldn't wear his Athar tunics.

Once they had put everything where it should, they went out to fly with their dragons.

Harry's heart leapt in joy as he and Rexeran soared through the air. Nothing could compare to this, not even flying on his broom. There was a link between them. They were one, their mind fused together. The rider had then to train himself and his bonded to ease the fusion and make it so that the melding of the two minds did not hinder their reflexes. Most of the time, the draconian part was not really in charge since Dragons could lack in foresight. But with Rexeran or Gae, Teneb and Harry were placed on a somewhat equal footing; the Elders could even be seen as their better. It was then more difficult and asked for a lot of practice, something both of them had lacked deeply.

Harry wanted to shout at the sky, he could feel the air under his wings, as he could feel his hands gripping Rexeran's scales. Finally, they had to retreat to their own mind as they landed near the stands where the competition had taken place, a few months ago. Harry couldn't help but weep internally at the keen sense of loss he got from their separation.

We are but a thought away, Astyan. You need not fear my absence.

Teneb and he climbed off, reluctant to part with the two Elders.

"Teneb?"

Both of them looked up sharply. They had been so lost in their joy-filled daze, that they had not even noticed the people watching them and even less the elf that had approached them.



“Master Kario?” Teneb’s face had completely closed up as he looked at his former mentor.

“Teneb... I-I’d like to talk with you.”

The elf seemed uncomfortable, not really knowing how to broach the subject.

Harry’s friend frowned slightly, shooting a look at his blood brother. Harry motioned for him to agree, knowing that Teneb needed to settle things once for all with the rider,

“Very well, lead the way.”

Harry watch them walk away, leaning against Rexeran. He could feel both of their magic flowing together smoothly, mixing, melding, and parting. He didn’t recall that from what he been told about the bond. Normally, their energies should remain separate. Thinking about magic, reminded him of the blocks they had found on him and Teneb, as well as the twist in their powers’ flow lines.

“Rexeran, can you sense the blocks on me?”

The Sowaroc looked at him.

We were told of them. Some come from your encounter with this Dark Lord, the same way that some of Teneb’s come from the Enchantments that were cast after the parting by your race. Regarding the rest, I ask you to trust me on this, Astyan.

Harry was annoyed at being kept in the dark again...

Don’t try to learn more about them. You will be told when you will be ready to handle this knowledge, no sooner. The same goes for Teneb. They do not hinder you, and taking them off too early could mean your death.

Realizing he wouldn’t learn anything by pestering his bonded, Harry relented.

“Very well, but I don’t like this, Rexeran.”



“Nobody likes to be kept in the Dark,” said someone behind them.

Harry nearly jumped out of his skin and shot a fireball in direction of the one who had startled him.

“Nice aim.”

You’re not helping; Adrien, but what else is there to expect from a Vampire... Rexeran sounded less than pleased with the old Undead. Your Blades are not at your back, getting careless with old age, are you?

Adrien did not answer. Harry got a good look at him. The Vampire was wearing the same kind of outfit, and seemed definitively uneasy as Rexeran pinned him with his eyes. He sent a small smile at Harry, his fangs gleaming in the light of the sun set.

Be careful of what you’re doing, Adrien, the chilling warning in Rexeran couldn’t be missed.

“Be sure I won’t make the same mistake twice.”

Rexeran starred at the Vampire, rainbow eyes turning a deep red color.

You better keep that promise, Imperator, because I will hold you to it, should any harm befall my bonded...

That said, he turned to Harry, touching the young man’s head with his own.

I’ll be back tomorrow morning, Astyan, we have much time to make up for... be safe.

“You too...”

Harry supposed Rexeran had said the later part to him only since Adrien showed no signs of having heard it.

The Sowaroc leapt in the air, leaving Harry and Adrien behind.

“So we meet again, Athar.”



Harry nodded, crossing his arms.

“You’ll have to tell me why Rexeran is so set against you sometimes.”

Adrien laughed mirthlessly.

“This is a story left to later time, mortal. Retelling it would open many old wounds, something which is not needed during these times.”

Harry could agree with that, so it brought him to the real question on his mind.

“What are you doing here, Adrien, and alone at that.”

Adrien smirked.

“My friends are gathering our forces.”

Harry shot him an unreadable look.

“Really?”

Adrien just smirked, enjoying Harry’s unease.

“Really, little mortal. Vampires will side in the coming war.”

He wanted him to ask... Gritting his teeth, Harry decided to cut the chase.

“And on which side? If you ever chose one?”

The fangs gleamed in the dimming light.

“The Dark Lord will regret ever trying to raise the Dead.” The tone was deadly, the eyes showing for once the predator Adrien was, and not the aristocrat he played.

“We will go to your world and join Albus Dumbledore.”

Harry felt relief wash through him. One less issue to worry about.

“Thank you.”



Adrien's lips twitched.

"Your Headmaster was generous in his offer as was the Minister. We will have a wizard binding contract securing the deal."

The Undead eyed him.

"You'll have to go back to your world soon, I know that the scholars think Voldemort won't be able to reach his goal, but we don't think so."

Harry frowned.

"And why is that?"

"He has already obtained blood from Luctan himself, after managing to summon him. He was the one you fought down the Goblins' caverns."

"That was Luctan!" blurted Harry.

Adrien confirmed it.

"It was; you were lucky that he had not been fully transferred to a new body. No matter how powerful you think you are, you are still no match to him."

"But then, Voldemort only needs..."

"Blood from the Enchanter's line. He will have a hard time finding someone with blood pure enough, but he will, it's only a matter of time..."

"Do you know of his descendants?"

Adrien looked at his hands.

"We know of the main ones. They are placed in safe houses as we speak."

"And if they were to refuse."



“Then they would be killed. We cannot leave Voldemort a chance to complete the ritual...”

Harry felt bad at hearing that since he could understand the reasoning. He just hoped it would not come to this. Adrien seemed to read his thoughts as he gave him a small smile.

“Yes, hopefully, it will not come to that...”

“Are you reading my mind?” Harry’s voice, though teasing, held a warning note.

“I wouldn’t dare... I will see you on the battle field, Athar.”

“You will.”

With a parting laugh, Adrien melted in the shadows, disappearing to Harry’s view. The young man looked through the darkening sky, trying to come with answers with little luck. Sighing he made his way back inside the Headquarters. He walked to the main room, knowing it was nearly dinner time.

Teneb was already here and seated at the masters’ table, an empty chair next to him. The room had at least tripled in volume and was currently filled with riders chatting loudly among each other.

The assembly was colorful, from the different type of hair, the clothes. But silence fell on the room as Harry made his way to his friend, head held high. Opheria and Kobalt had also come back. Harry bowed his head to them, as they placed their hand above their heart, saluting him as it was asked by tradition. He could see other people at the head table, sporting the same mark that was adorning Teneb’s and his temple.

Silently, he took his place.

Demenor signalled to servants to come and serve the meal. It was a silent affair.

Finally, the Headquarters’ leader stood up as the remnants of the desert were being taken away. He clapped his hands.



“Riders, You all know why you were called today. A war is fast approaching among us. And you know why. If there are people among us today that think that our Queen is in the wrong then I ask him to speak up.”

A fly could have been heard.

Harry snorted quietly, shook his head and stood up, drawing every eye to him.

“Let’s be honest. Most of you dislike me or humans in general. Most of you think your Queen is crazy for even suggesting joining both our worlds.” He paused for a bit.

“I know what you are now thinking. But, you know what, I don’t care. Think of me whatever you wish, it won’t change anything for me. You will only prove me right. Just don’t mistake a fight for another. The fight you will be involved has little to do with humans. Sure, Queen Valera is more open-minded than most, but so are a lot of elves from Ynris. Geryan is not trying to campaign against humans. If so, he could have brought his plight to your council. No, he’s trying to overthrow your Queen.”

He looked around, anger simmering in his green eyes, promise of a rising power.

“This is not my world. As you showed it, I do not belong here, so I’ll leave this to your conscious.”

This said; he looked at Teneb before sweeping out of the room, cloak billowing behind him in a Snape-like fashion.

Heated talk erupted once the doors had closed on his back. Teneb followed his friend quickly, Opheria and Kobalt with him.

They found Harry in his room, writing letters.

“Nice speech.”

Harry looked up, rolling his eyes.



“Opheria, Kobalt,” his tone was more reserved as he spotted them.

“Athar.” They bowed.

“Oh! For Merlin’s sake, call me by my name!”

The Magis and the Elemental smiled.

“We wanted you to know that not all the riders are set against you. The younger riders and some of the older ones were willing to listen to us and hearing what you and Teneb had to go through had them thinking.”

“We’re not saying, they changed, but they are willing to listen to you and give you a chance.”

“I’m sure...” Doubt was filling Harry’s tone.

Teneb walked to his side and placed his hand on his shoulder.

“Give them a chance, Harry, or you’ll be no better than them.”

Harry looked up, eyes narrowed.

“That’s low, Teneb.”

The elf gave him a ‘you-think-I-care?’ look. With a sigh, Harry relented.

“Alright, why not... By the way, how is Celen’s mare, I was told Shadow...”

“The mare is well, even if Celen was a bit annoyed at having to leave her home, he can’t deny that the foal will be promising. Do you want to claim him?”

Harry shook his head.

“Thanks, but no thanks; I have already enough to do with one horse.” He yawned. “I’ll see you in the morning?”

Teneb nodded.



“Seven?”

“As you want,” the wizard turned to the two others, “you’re welcome to come and bring whoever you want.”

Both Opheria and Kobalt agreed and left quickly afterwards. Teneb and Harry spoke for an hour. Teneb was giving him news of his family, explaining a few things to the young wizard regarding the power stones. Harry told him of what he and Lienhor had learnt in Gringotts and agreed to meet with one of the archives’ guardian.

They parted and went to sleep.

The week was spent either training, flying with Rexeran, tuning their magic to each other, or going on mission to help attacked village.

It seemed that Geryan was still bidding his time. However welcome this respite was, it was hard on everyone’s nerves. Finally it came to an end in the middle of the second week...

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Harry and Teneb had taken to train early in the morning and late in the afternoon. They were often joined by Opheria and Kobalt, but also by various riders.

Though wary at first, Harry had relaxed slightly during the week. He had even sought the council of two old riders, a Magis, Joal, and a Fire Elemental, Ferin.

The Fire Elemental had helped him with his control over his element. It had been tied to closely to his emotion, since he had only started harnessing his gift late in his life. Most Elemental gifted were detected in their first year of life and train as soon as possible.

The Magis had showed him how to wield magic through his sword. They had been the only two he had willingly called Masters. They had remained aloof during their teaching.

When asked about their reasons. They only said that he would need the skills to survive.



“Focus, Athar, you mustn’t try to direct the flow, you must canalize it. Teneb, you have to fuel your sword more than that!”

Harry frowned at his sword. The amber in the hilt was glowing lightly, pulsing even. Closing his eyes, he started to power it. The glow intensified in seconds.

“Good. Now, en garde!”

Harry fell in his starting stance, as did Teneb. Both their sword’s stone shining.

“Start!”

Harry waited for Teneb to make the first move, watching for the tiniest signs which would betray his friend’s intention.

Teneb suddenly lunged forwards, sword raised. Harry steeled himself to block his blow. However he barely managed to react in time as Teneb leapt in the air, spinning a little, bringing his sword down while sending a kick for Harry’s torso at the same time.

Harry fell to the floor and rolled back to his feet. Sending a blasting curse through his sword, sighing as his aim was way off, hitting the ground a meter away from Teneb. He took to steps forwards and used his momentum to jump, using a bit wandless magic to hit Teneb in the chin while doing a somersault. Falling back to his feet, he noticed that Teneb has used his own magic to stop himself from falling to the floor and his widened as he saw a red light heading his way, side-stepping the hex, he brought his sword down, sending a stunner back, closely followed by a disarming one. Spinning, he dodged Teneb’s thrust, falling to his feet and sweeping the grounds with his sword, forcing Teneb to jump and sent a blasting hex again, hitting his target for once. A tingle washed through him, signalling his sword was completely powered. Smiling, he raised his aura, checking the flow of magic in the swords. He could sense Teneb doing the same. His body was shaking with the power channelled through it. He raised his sword and bowed to Teneb before both Athar lunged at each other. Their blades met with a loud clanging noise. Swords locked in front of them, they tried to over power the other but couldn’t. They took steps back and started to circle the other. Suddenly Harry,



at a non-human speed ran to Teneb, cutting through the air in a large arc, his sword was blocked and he spun to parry Teneb's blow to his side, thrusting forwards, he was hit in the jaw as Teneb freed on his hand from his hold on his weapon.

Wincing as he felt his jaw crack a bit, he started to twirl, his sword doing chained slashing motions up and down.

Teneb parried some, dodged others and answered with his own blows.

The elf was the first one to draw blood as Harry had tried a new move and thus left an opening in his guard. Not one to be overdone, Harry combined a series of feint, forcing Teneb in a defensive mode, firing three curses from different directions; he followed with a twirl of his sword, and a thrust, cutting a small lock.

"Thanks for the hair cut."

"You want the other side done?"

Teneb laughed as he danced out of the way, before spinning, bringing his sword down, only to have it blocked. The two friends locked their blade, pushing, both physically and magically.

Suddenly, before they could continue, a rider burst in the practice room, making everyone jump, but Harry and Teneb who were much too attuned to the magic to be surprised. They had both sensed him coming.

"Athars, you have to leave for the palace as soon as possible."

Both Harry and Teneb stepped back from each other, sheathing their blades. Teneb frowned.

"Do you know what this is about?"

The man took a deep breath.

"Geryan and a delegation arrived at the castle."



Every face in the room closed up. They all know what it meant.

Harry and Teneb looked at each other and waved their hand. Seconds later, they were standing among their fellow riders in all Athar regalia, power rolling from them, flowing around gently. The riders looked at them, still in awe of the power the two could wield. Both their elements could be seen shimmering in their eyes.

“Very well,” said Teneb and both of them stalked out of the room. Before he exited it, Harry turned glowing green eyes towards Opheria who nearly shivered under their intensity.

“Opheria, could you and Kobalt gather the names of those willing to fight along side us, it would be much appreciated.”

The young Magis nodded, watching as he stalked out, door closing after him.

“This is war then...” sighed a rider.

Joal nodded his eyes still on the door.

“That it is, Kery.”

Kery was an older elf than Teneb.

“Do you think we have a chance to win this?”

Joal turned to him, a slight smile on his lips.

“The Dragons made a good choice; I start to understand it, now. We’ll win this fight, and I know I will follow the Athars.”

The old Magis looked at Kobalt.

“I require joining their forming wing.”

Shoulders sagging with relief the Water Elemental nodded gratefully to the rider.

As the riders started to discuss the coming battles, Harry and Teneb strode outside where Rexeran and Gae were waiting for them.



Greeting, Astyan... Be on our guard, and don't let anyone look down on you.

Harry nodded and the four of them leapt in the air, disappearing as soon as they had gathered enough altitude. They reappeared above Horevald and Harry could feel the tension in the atmosphere. Soldier had built a small camp outside the city, without doubt Geryan's escort, if the white flag flapping in the middle was anything to go by.

We'll be checking on the wards and on the other islands... Be careful my bonded.

Harry leaned forwards placing his forehead against the cool golden scales of Rexeran's neck.

"I will."

Gae and Rexeran disappeared in a blink of the eyes as soon as they were back in the sky. Teneb and Harry started to walk up to the castle entrance. They were stopped at the doors by four guards.

Harry found it exceedingly funny to see those four adult soldiers jump to attention once they realized who those two sixteen year-old young men were.

One of them spoke in a small quartz and minutes later, an herald rushed to their side and ushered them in, quite a difference from the composed pace of the previous time. However upon reaching the audience room, they slowed down. Straightening themselves, the two blood brothers stepped in together, showing their unity to those already present.

Geryan and his peers were seated on one end, Valera, her son, Doryan and the other Counsellors forming the Queen close circle.

Geryan was an elf in its prime, around four hundred year-old from what Teneb had told him. He had long hazel hair, braided as was the tradition. He had a square chin, prominent cheekbones, intelligent dark blue eyes and a thin nose. He was wearing brown pants and an ivory tunic embroidered with his family's emblems. For the moment



he was sneering scorn oozing from his skin as he watched Harry take his place at Teneb's side.

"I gather you will not be deterred from this folly, Valera."

The Queen shook her head.

"This must be done, Geryan, or I fear none of us will survive this age, can't you see that we're degenerating?"

Geryan sneered.

"I knew Ynris dwellers were touched, but I did not think you were that deluded... I take it that you won't step down peacefully?"

"You are guilty of treason, Geryan, you're are not in a position of giving judgement, or asking for anything."

The elf took out a piece of paper.

"I hoped this would not come to this, Valera and that you would have seen reason." He pointed to Harry. "I couldn't believe that the riders went along with your charade and allowed one of THEM to wear the rider's tunic, not event thinking of the Athar title. No matter what is said," he smirked at Harry,

Celen placed a calming on his mother's arm.

"You made your case, Geryan, but our decision won't change."

The elf sighed.

"Can't you see the perversion of such an idea, young prince, your father...?"

"My father dishonored his name by trying to raise the dead. You will not sully this room by speaking his name," Stated Celen, eyes cold.

Geryan did not appear surprised.

"Very well, so be it then." He pushed the paper towards Valera who took it, face blank before signing it, handing it to Celen. It was then



signed by Doryan, Xhan Luan and Xhana Cya. Teneb wrote down his name afterwards and Harry was about to do it too, eyes skimming over the title: 'War Declaration', when Geryan stopped him.

"Don't bother, your name held no power, no matter what title was given to you to go along with Valera's plan..."

Suddenly the man found himself mute and lifted in the air by his collar which was making it hard for him to breath.

Harry had his hand out, eyes blazing. He stood up and approached the elf, paying no heed to those watching them.

"The moment you best me in a loyal fight, you will be able to say whatever you want about me. Until then," he pause, levitating the High-Duke back to his chair, "you will give me the respect of my title, whether you think it earned or not."

Geryan was trying to catch his breath as he looked at Harry with stony eyes. He finally nodded.

"We agreed then."

With that said; Harry sat back down and signed the parchment before pushing it to Geryan's side. A Magis duplicated it, pushing the copy toward Valera's side.

All of them stood up. The silence stretched for a while before Geryan finally turned and headed out, his escort behind him.

As the doors closed, Valera slumped back in her chair, taking her head in her hands. Doryan shot a look at his son.

"This is War, then."



## Chapter 29: War

Harry had trouble sleeping that night, plagued by the war declaration he had witnessed a few hours ago. He had hoped against everything that Geryan would see reason, that a war would be avoided, but it seemed Fates were not listening to him, not that they had ever did.

It was way past midnight when the young wizard managed to fall into an agitated sleep.

As he woke up, hit by the sun rays, he didn't feel that much rested. Slowly, he readied himself for what should be a trying day.

As he was putting on his boots, he heard a soft knock on his door. Glancing at his mirror, he waved his hand and watched as his hair was pulled back and tied.

"Enter."

The door was opened slowly and a servant entered, bowing stiffly to him.

"Breakfast is being served in the Blue Room, Athar."

"Thank you."

Harry nodded to the woman and watched as she went to open the heavy curtains then bowed again and exited the room. Looking out of the window, Harry could see the first sun rays peering out of the trees. It would be a nice day.

Sighing, he fingered his Athar insignia, he had a feeling this would not be a good day...

Exiting his room, he went to Teneb's but met Djaryle. The young elf smiled at him.

"Harry!"

Harry found himself smiling at the young female elf, feeling as if he was seeing an old friend. He frowned a little at those feelings. True,



Djaryle had been nice to him but he had not known her long enough for them to be on such good terms... He looked up at him and any thoughts of oddities regarding his and Djaryle's relationship were dismissed as he looked in her eyes.

"Hello, Djaryle," he said, bowing his head

"How are you holding up?" she asked, concern showing in her eyes.

Harry raked his free hand through his hair, as they walked toward the Blue Room.

"As good as can be expected."

The young female smiled gently, something which seemed to appeased Harry's mind. She smiled like Hermione.

"You know I'm here if you need to talk about things, don't you, Harry?"

The young man nodded slowly.

"I know..."

Djaryle smiled blindingly.

"I'm happy to hear you say it, Harry. You trust me, don't you?"

Harry furrowed his brows. Of course he did, Herm-Djaryle had always looked out for him...

"Of course I do, Djaryle..."

She looked at him in the eyes, a serious and serene look on her face.

"I'm glad, Harry, I'm very glad."

They finally reached the Blue Room and entered, seating themselves around the table. Harry sat next to Teneb, nodding at Demenor who was seating on his right.



All of them ate in silence, the weight of what was decided the previous days weighing heavily on all their minds.

Finally, Valera stood up.

"I ask all those involved with the coming war to follow me in the Strategy Room. There are a lot of things that need to be decided."

She swept out of the room, followed quickly by Celen, Doryan, Demenor, several people Harry recognized as generals, strategists, intendants, counsellors... Teneb rose from his seat.

"Aren't you coming, Harry?"

The young wizard looked at him.

"Will it do a difference if I don't, Teneb. None of them will acknowledge anything I will said as worth thinking about. After all, I'm a human." The last part was said with distaste.

He sensed more than saw the fist coming his way. Teneb's blow stopped milimeters from his face. The elf's face was pale with fury.

"Never say that that way again, Harry. You are a human, you are a fire gifted, you are an Athar and a rider. You are my blood brother, my equal and I don't care what others might think!"

He withdraw his fist.

"Now, get up and come. I need you there with me."

Harry looked at him piercingly before standing up.

"For you then Teneb."

Both of them walked toward the Strategy room.

They sat next to Celen and watched at the huge maps of the different islands.

"Meyan is under control. Keis, Jiya and Lyn will probably fall soon. We also need to take into account the fact that those three islands



might start to sink at any time. Olesar, I need you to set up an evacuation plan as soon as possible. Talk with the Athars and Demenor regarding what help they can offer you.”

The Magis nodded, taking notes and started to work on it.

“For now, Ynris and Arthania are safe, but there is no telling how long this truce will last. I want a team to work on disabling Geryan circles. Use any resources available. Reald, can you take care of this?”

She turned to her son.

“Celen, I want you to work with the generals. I want detailed reports as to our army. I also want you to spread our forces to defend the key points on Ynris and Arthania while keeping enough reserve to be able to react in case of a massive attack.”

Celen nodded.

“I need to warn every people living on both islands of the upcoming war. The villages must be either protected or evacuated to the nearest fortresses. The latters need to stock as much food and supplies as they can as well as secure a water source. Doryan, see that it is done.”

She folded her hands and swept the room with her eyes.

“Now I await your advice. Before you start, we won’t be the attacker. If Geryan wants war, he’ll have to come to us. We will only intervene as an evacuation force should the need arise.”

Some seemed a bit put out at that, but none of them dared contradict the Queen.

“Kiom, report.”

A tall and burly elf stood up, waving his hand at the screen.

“We have asked all the villages to start their crops earlier. Most of them are now finished and I can announce to your Majesty that the crops were good. They are currently being secured in the fortresses.”



Data appeared on the screen showing how big the crops had been in the different areas.

“We asked for grains to be sent to the North, and some fruits to the east. The West and the North also agreed to send parts of their medicinal herbs crops to the area where they are lacking in them... Ynris didn’t ask for anything.” For the next hour, all of them discuss foods, water, furnitures, weapons, cattle, living arrangements, medical support. Harry half-listened. He could understand how intendance could decide between defeat and victory, but that didn’t stop him from being bored...

Finally, Kiom stepped down, only to be replaced by an Air-Elemental.

“Your Majesty, as you requested, some of my men were sent to investigate.” He waved his hand, conjuring a map of the four islands.

“For now, Geryan’s forces seemed to be gathered in Meyan. My agents weren’t able to evaluate the number of his soldiers, but they reported the presence of several Masters and many Gifted.”

“What of their weaponry?”

The man looked at the young elf who had spoken.

“They are well equipped, good quality weapons, we couldn’t find evidence of massive destruction weapons, but I would be cautious regarding that point. Heavy magical activity was reported from deserted areas in Meyan. They could be trials for new weapons...”

Grim looks were sent across the room.

“I want a team to research way to wards places against magical attacks, or ways to disable magical weapons. But most of all, I want you to find a way to win this with as little bloodshed as possible.” As a few soldiers were about to speak up, she held her hand.

“I am aware that we are about to enter a war, but I want killings to be a last resort measure; incapacitate, harm, knock out, capture, and only if you have no other choice than killing or be killed, then yes, kill.”



Silence fell on the room, following the Queen's words. She looked at all of them.

"I will not let Geryan destroy our world or corrupt ourselves."

A counsellor stood up.

"I'm sorry to have to say that, your Majesty, but wouldn't it be easier to compromise with Geryan? He's after all only asking for the rules our ancestors implemented to be obeyed."

He sent a cold look at Harry.

"No offense to the Athar, but I have to admit being torn over this issue. We have nothing to do with humans. Let's live like we have for the past millenia. That wizard will never manage to complete the ritual so what little obligation we had to them is now void. The Athar now has to choose what world he wants to live in as ours and the human community lived apart for too long to reunite now."

Quite a few other people nodded at those words. Valera was about to speak when Harry raised his hand, slowly gathering the attention of the room.

He stood up and waved his hand at the screen which turned blank and looked at those assembled in the room.

"This was quite an interesting speech. But I think I must clear a few misconceptions."

He whirled on his heels and walked to a window, his back to the people listening to him.

"First, The Queen is not asking for wizards', not humans', mind you, and your community to become suddenly the best of friends, she wants us to be able to cooperate peacefully." He paused slightly, ordering his thoughts.

"Then you seem to think that everything will be fine and go back to what it was should you resume your 'let's ignore the humans' policy, forgive me, but that's a load of bullshit." He whirled on his heels. "Yes,



this civil war might be stopped, but that doesn't mean that you will be safe." He waved his hand at the screen, the face of the man he had fought in Gringotts appearing.

"Do you recognize this man? I know some of you do."

An old elf raised an eyebrow.

"This is Luctan whose name was thrice damned," he answered calmly.

Harry nodded.

"It is indeed Luctan. What would you say if I told you he was raised from the dead through Necromancy and made a pact with the Dark wizard waging war in my world? What would you say if I told you he was part of the attack that managed to steal the Stolen power stone which had been guarded by the goblins for millenias?"

The eldest of those gathered around the table had paled dramatically at Harry's words, disbelief battling with pure fear in their eyes.

The young wizard was now raging.

"What will it take for you to open your eyes and realize your are not the center of the world, that you do not know better than others!"

"Luctan is dead, human. And no mere wizard would be powerful enough to raise him from where he was banished by our strongest circle."

Harry repressed a snarl.

"Really? What about Blood Magic? Anyone knowing how to store the energy of tortured and killed beings could gather enough energy to summon any spirit! Don't you go to the Spirit plane anymore? Can't you see how it is perverted and tainted nowadays?"

The young wizard was breathing hard.



“Believe me or not, I don’t care anymore...” He turned to Teneb. “I trust you’ll tell me what is required of me. I’m tired of trying to make you see the threat Voldemort is to both our worlds.” He walked to the door, then paused his back to those assembled in the room. “Just so you can’t say I didn’t warn you. No matter how much you want to deny it, Voldemort made a pact with Luctan: some blood and his support against a new body and a new life. He only needs to find descendants from the Enchanter to finish the job...”

Harry did not wait for their reactions, he left, not wanting to start shouting, now, it was much better to leave them with the picture of a controlled and thoughtful Athar, not a temper-tamtrum throwing child. He walked to the training room, since he needed to let out some steam. It wouldn’t do if he started to lose control over his magic in the castle.

Pushing the door open, he acknowledged the soldiers who were already practicing against each other. He warmed up quickly and conjured a dummy with a careless hand wave. Raising his sword, he watch as the dummy started to circle him slowly, he did not take off his eyes of it, watching its every moves, trying to spot the tell-tale sign of a coming attack. Suddenly he brought his sword down, blocking a swipe to his legs before pushing the dummy’s blade away, retaliating with a slash to its abdomen which was easily side-stepped. Harry did not wait and started to trust, parry, dodge, roll, jump or slash, relying purely on his instinct. He barely registered the fact that he managed to “kill” his dummy and immediately conjured two new ones, upping the scales every time he managed to hit one. Soon he was surrounded by four dummies, adrenaline pumping through his veins, breath ragged, sweat gliding down his back, down his face, blurring his vision from time to time.

He managed to disarm two but was caught off guard and was disarmed and held at sword’s point, a dagger pressed to his throat by the fourth one.

With a tired sigh, he dispelled the two remaining dummies and conjured a towel and a cup of water, sitting and stretching to avoid any avoidable soreness.



“That was a good fight, Athar.”

Harry felt like he was about to smash his head in the closest hard surface he could find. He wanted to be left alone. He did not want to have to bear the company of others at the moment. Trying to keep a blank face, he looked up from his crouching position to see a gruff looking elf. The soldier was only muscles and bones with sharp brown eyes and an obviously broken nose.

“Thank you,” he said, hoping the guy would get the hint and leave him alone.

“Would you agree to fight with me? I think we might be able to teach each other a few tricks?”

Harry sighed. Any other time, he would have appreciated the offer and would have probably accepted it, but at the moment he had too much on his mind to engage in friendly spars. He wanted to be able to fight unrestricted, like he did with his dummy and drown his frustrations in the adrenaline rush of duelling.

He looked up and was about to answer the elf, trying to come up with a good excuse when the door opened and an army cadet entered.

“All soldiers are being called back to the barracks.”

He turned on his heels and left quickly.

Immediately the room started to empty itself, the soldiers picking up their weapons and straightening themselves before leaving, talking about what could possibly be the cause of this call.

The soldier looked piercingly at Harry.

“Seems like our spar will have to wait. I’ll look forward to the day I will be allowed to duel you...”

Harry nodded a bit distractedly, but the elf did not seem to notice or if he did, he didn’t comment on it. Soon Harry was the only one left in the room. As he finished stretching, he decided that a round of meditation would do him good. He had been getting more and more



stressed lately and he knew he was more likely to lose control in those conditions. Should things come to worse, he wanted to go to battle with a clear head.

Sitting down, leg crossed, hands on his knees, he slowed down his breathing and allowed himself to fall in as deep a trance as he dared to.

This was a technique Arxeren had been trying to teach him and that he had kept practicing on his own. If he managed to fall in a deep meditation trance he could stretch his senses and feel magic flows around him. During his first try, he had nearly been sucked in those flows and had been extremely cautious since then... But today he needed to know about those islands, about the magic surrounding Horevald.

Carefully he anchored himself as strongly as he could, using his link with Rexeran to strengthen it. He then extended magical tendrils towards the castle wards. After a few minutes, he was reassured on them. He shot a small tendril towards the magic node and the power stone that the wards were built on and cautiously followed it to the next one. He always make sure he was still linked to his anchor as he resumed his check on the magical wards around other main buildings... As he progressed, the magic seemed to get more and more spare ; he got a kind of strange feeling, a taint that seemed to permeate the magical flows, like a lingering feeling. His link to his anchor was getting thinner and thinner as he progressed further and further away. As he tried to reach for another node, he felt his link waver. The currents got wilder around him and he felt himself being dragged away. Panic rising, he reached out for his link as he started to retreat from his trance state. Following his link back to his body, he realized how drained he was getting. He was really going to regret this in a few minutes...

Finally he managed to reintegrate his body and eased himself out of his trance.

“Back with us, Harry?”

Harry winced at the pounding in his head.



“Harry?”

Gritting his teeth, turned his head extremely slowly towards the source of this way too loud voice.

“Not so loud Teneb, and for Merlin’s sake get rid of that blasted light!”

“Serves you right!” shouted his blood brother, wrenching a moan from Harry’s lips.

“Teneb...” He said, his skull feeling like it was about to fall in pieces.

“Don’t you Teneb me! Do you know how worried I was! You were in your trance for the whole day! I couldn’t even reach you, you idiot!” The last word was nearly screamed, getting a pain-filled whimper from the young wizard.

“Teneb, I’m really sorry, but please, not so loud...”

Harry could feel the anger rolling off his friend.

“I really ought to let you suffer like this, but I need to talk to you and I don’t think you’re fit for talking right now.”

He waved his hand, and Harry’s head immediately felt better: light and clear.

“Thanks...”

Teneb just glared at him.

“What possessed you to do something that stupid, Harry! You know how dangerous it is to dive in the magical currents!”

“I got it, Teneb, please, spare me the lecture....”

“Only if you promise me not to do something like that again!”

Harry sighed.

“Teneb, neither me nor you can promise this, you know it. We’re going to enter a war, I think both of us are going to do crazy things...”



The young elf sat next to his friend and took his head in his hand.

“That was a reckless thing you did... Why didn’t you tell me? I could have anchored you. It’d have been easier for you this way... But well, that’s done.”

He raked a hand through his hair. Harry noticed that the night had fallen quite some time ago... He really had stayed in trance state for the whole day as his stomach made it known.

Teneb repressed a small smile at the loud grumbling coming from his friend stomach.

“You’ll have to wait for a few minutes before going to the kitchen for a snack. I need to tell you what was decided...”

Harry sighed and sat, trying to quiet his protesting stomach.

“Well, what’s the plan?”

Teneb rolled his eyes as he sat on the bed.

“We’re going back to the headquarters to train with the wings. Demenor will call us every evening to keep us updated on the situation and call on the Dragons should it be required. We have to organize the riders in case of an attack or an evacuation. We will also participate to the warding of several key places.”

Harry nodded, that made sense.

“Should an attack occur, one of us will go to battle while the other will stay at Horevald to protect it,” Teneb looked a bit hesitant as he said that part.

“Let me guess,” snapped Harry, “I’m assigned to that post, aren’t I? They don’t trust me enough to let me fight...” He shook his head, snarling. “I don’t really see why they had me come. They are deaf to what I say, they don’t trust me, nor my skills...”

He stood up and started pacing, watched by Teneb.



The young elf racked his hand in his hair.

“I’ll tell you that, Harry, stay here for a month. If nothing happens, then go back to your world...”

Harry stopped and looked piercingly at him.

“Are you serious?”

“One month, Harry. If by that time they are still foolish enough not to involve you more in their plan and that your help is not truly needed, I’ll considered your obligation fulfilled.”

Harry stared deeply at his friend who did not avoided his eyes and met them calmly.

“Very well. One month, Teneb and I’ll hold you to this promise.”

His stomach broke the silence that settled between them.

Rolling his eyes at the amused face of his blood brother, Harry walked to the door.

“I’m going to take a snack, when are we leaving by the way?”

Teneb stood up.

“Tomorrow morning.”

Harry stopped him as he walked by him.

“They did not believe me about Luctan, didn’t they?”

Teneb shifted uneasily as Harry’s eyes blazed with anger before getting an icy edge.

“Harry...”

“Don’t bother Teneb. After all, it is a human reaction to deny something we are scared of... It is very human... But they better not come to me when Voldemort completes the ritual...”



Teneb frowned.

“You mean if he completes it.”

Harry shook his head.

“If you knew Voldemort like I did, you would know that he is going to manage to get his hand on some of the Enchanter’s blood sooner or latter. It is only a matter of time.”

“But the Vampires...”

A cynic expression passed on Harry’s face.

“They are hiding them, yes, but think what would happen if one of those bearing this blood was a servant of Lord Voldemort and managed to escape the Vampires long enough to give his master some blood or send some of his family to Him?”

Teneb looked down, face somber.

“Should it happen, the ritual would take place either at Samhain or at the Winter Solstice. I did a few research on it. The few archives I found on it were vague but all of them said that the only way to break it was to either stop the caster during one of the three initial steps. Afterwards, only the death of the caster or the destruction of the focus would be able to close the door.”

Harry threw him a sardonic smile.

“If Voldemort manage to complete the ritual, you can be sure than breaking it will not be that simple. Why can’t they see this!”

Teneb shrugged.

“They must be hoping it won’t come to this.”

Harry snorted.

“Then they are fools...” He left the room, heading the kitchen, mulling over what Teneb had told him.



The Elf sighed wearily and walked to his own rooms. Maybe it had been a mistake to call Harry back...

oooooooooooooooo

Two weeks passed slowly. Two weeks of tensed waiting for Geryan to make his move. Everyone was getting jumpier as the day passed. Fights broke everyday among the soldiers and the civilians. Harry could not miss it as he and Teneb were sent to countless fortresses to strengthen or erect wards around them. The young wizard would be thankful when Geryan would move. Anything else would be better than that damned wait. While it was the right things to do, it was one of the worse attitude to adopt strategically-wise. The wait did nothing for the soldiers' nerves and it made them vulnerable since they couldn't know what the ennemy had planned. They could only guess or assume that Geryan would attack like this or that. There was no certainty.

So, Harry and Teneb had been training in earnest. When they weren't traveling to a fortress for wards, they were practicing, either alone or with the riders that asked to train with them. During the time they had been away, Kobalt and Opheria had rounded the riders willing to fly with them. They started with ten of them and by the end of the first week, twenty more had joined them. Most were either young or among the elders. The former were not as prejudiced and the later wise enough to set their priorities straight

They had divided them into two groups, each one under one of the Athars' lead. Kobalt was Harry's second and Opheria was Teneb's.

Once a day, they gathered and fought a mock battle, whether it was arian or on the grounds. While Harry's group was winning most of their air battle, Teneb nearly always managed to lead his team to victory while on the grounds.

Today would be a closed score. They had decided on a full out battle, which meant everything short of lethal blows were allowed. The fight took place in the air and on the ground. As long as you were not dubbed dead or out of the delimited area, you were fair game.



Harry reported his attention on Teneb's team which was flying in front of them. He quickly counted them, noticing five were missing... Looking around he spotted the nearby trees...

Placing a finger over his Athar mark he concentrated on the riders under his orders before sending his orders.

*There are missing five of their numbers, they are probably waiting in those trees to ambush us. Hydra formation, shields up, full speed, we need to part them. Close your eyes on three, then attack.*

Harry did not wait for their answers and signaled to Rexeran to accelerate. The Sowaroc sent a warm feeling of acceptance as he flapped his wings effortlessly. Harry kept his magical awareness at its peak, sensing the other riders take their positions. That would be the first time they tested this formation and Harry was curious to see if it would work. Joal was on his left, Kobalt on his right. Teneb and his team had not moved.

*Joal, overload wave, now.*

The Magis nodded and as Harry unleashed a wave of fire, backed by Rexeran own flames, he felt the Magis tweak his magic in it.

With a satisfied smirk, Harry watch as the wave did its job and go rid of whatever surprise Teneb had had in store for them.

Really, did his blood brother thought Harry would fall twice for his trick.

He felt a ward break as well as a few minor enchantments, overloaded by the power of the wave. Through his senses, he could feel the riders following him as they flew at full speed towards Teneb's group.

*Shields up.*

Harry gathered his power.

*On my count, one, two, three!*



“Solarem,” he whispered, closing his eyes as a bright light shot from his palm and exploded in the sky, blinding all those in a hundred-meter range.

Using his magical senses, Harry shot several petrifying curses towards several riders. Only one hit his target. They really were getting the hang of magical awareness.

### *Hydra One*

Immediately the riders took their place behind him: Kobalt on his right, Joal on his left, a young elf, Kery, above him and a Air Elemental, Baran, under him. The rest of those under his orders were spread in V patterns behind them.

Teneb had spread his team in four V pattern. As they came into casting-range, Harry felt them summon shields.

*They raised their shields, archers, try to hit them with the Leeches, Joal, your team knows what to do. Kobalt, your group distract them. I take care of the five who had been waiting to ambush us. Hydra two.*

Immediately the group parted in two, one following Harry, the other behind Kobalt. They went through Teneb's team, shooting curses, arrows and daggers at them, as well as ropes to try to block their dragons' wings. Harry eyes widened as he saw three Duskers suddenly appear around him and close on him. One of them, came from above him and dove, claws out to try to rip Rexeran's wings to shreds. Immediately, Harry popped a few meters away, his mind so much intertwined with Rexeran that he did not need to ask. They really were one at this moment. He felt the chilly fire of the Duskers which had been coming from his right and leaned on Rexeran's neck, appearing a few meters away.

*We got two of them, Athar, the third one is too quick...*

Harry frowned a bit, then concentrated on the one still following him, all the while attacking and repelling the curses coming his way.

*Alright, on my signal, pop out for four heart beats and reappear ten meters away. One, two, three!*



He unleashed a tightly concentrated fire wave, with enough power behind it to put the Dusker out. He did not have time to enjoy this as he saw vines starting to creep on Rexeran body, growing thicker and bigger by the seconds. Immediately, he stood up on Rexeran's back, carefully balancing himself as he started to cut them with his sword, while uncorking a small black vial.

He looked, around, ducked a particular vicious severing hex, returning one immediately and assessed the situation.

*Hydra four*

The two groups parted again, this time in four smaller units.  
*You all know what to do.*

As he said that, he dumped the content of the vial on the vines, watching with undisguised happiness as the vermin withered under his gaze,

Mrs Weasley had been right; Mrs Gardenia's Weed Remover was really efficient. He settled back against Rexeran's neck, enjoying the thrill of adrenaline shooting through him as they barreled under a barrage of curses coming from the three riders that had been waiting to ambush them.

They rose again.

*Alright, we take them one by one. Vanylle, Cal, you watch our backs, Janelle, Xend, we attack.*

Soon they were rid of two of their opponents, the two others deciding to disappear, not before shooting gas explosive at the others. Harry moved his hand, dispelling the gas, but smelled enough to learn it was a powerful soporific, if the almond smell was anything to go by.

*We move to cover Joal and his group, watch out for those gas things, they are potent.*

Harry felt his magic hum happily as Rexeran and he reappeared above Joal, sliding on magical currents to reach their destination. Unsheathing his sword, he twirled it around, repelling a few curses.



He had decided to forego the shield. It was draining and weakened his spells as they had to pass through it before hitting their targets.

Spotting a ball of crackling grey light heading straight toward Joal's back, he immediately set it aflame and dispelled it, his power overcoming the one of the Elemental that had sent this attack. He started to zoom across the skies, sending curses right and left, avoiding arrows. He cursed lowly as he felt a sharp pain in his left shoulder and turned to see a small steel star embedded in his flesh. He could feel the magic surrounding the small weapon that had managed to avoid his senses. Cursing again, he took it out, whispering a basic clotting charm to stop the hemorrhage.

*Athar, we are ready.*

Joal's mind voice, echoed through the link Teneb and he had set up with their men.

Harry smiled wickedly. Teneb had come up with a new kind of shield that wasn't too draining on the riders and that couldn't be dispelled. The only way to break it seemed to be the overload and it meant the attacker had to spend a great deal of energy to shatter it.

So the young wizard had tried to find a way around it...

*To everyone still in the game, activate your protection on two; Joal, start the process on three. One, two.*

He pressed the scale around his neck, merging his power with Rexeran, breathless like usual before the amount of magic flowing through his bonded.

He quietly whispered the activating word.

"Merlin"

Immediately he felt the potion he had made everyone drink before starting this mock battle activate within himself.

*Three!*



From where he was, he saw Joal raise his hands and several areas became hidden to his magical awareness since they no longer contained any magic.

That was definitively a neat trick they had come up with. First the archers shot arrows with a small vials stuck on them. As long as the smallest drop of the potion hit the dragon and the rider it was enough for their spell to work.

Using the small particles of a smashed power stone in the potion, they could literary drain the being or object hit of its magic for twenty minutes, using those particles as focus. It was tricky and required a skilled Triad of Magis to work it out, but it had worked...

Knowing his team would deal quickly with all those deprived of their powers, Harry looked for Teneb. He could sense five riders that hadn't been hit with the potion, and none of them were Teneb...

Before he could wonder about his blood brother's whereabouts, he was caught in a miniature tornado.

Gripping Rexeran's neck with all his strength, he tried spot the young elf to no avail. He asked Rexeran to appear away, hoping the tornado would not follow him.

He reappeared five hundreds neters away, the strong flapping of Rexeran's wing the only source of wind around him. Looking around he saw the tornado coming straight for him and cursed Teneb to Hell for that trick.

A thought hit him, after all nothing stopped him from using that blasted whirl of wind to his advantage... He started to fly slowly, making sure the tornado was following him and he started to slalom between Teneb's remaining riders.

*Harry! Get your own tornado to do your dirty work!*

Teneb's mind voice had a distinctive whiny quality, something which amused Harry.

*You shouldn't have created one and send it after me then!*



*You're really no fun.*

Harry snorted as he sensed the disappearance of it air-made stalker. If he was right, then Teneb had only three riders left while he had nine. Concentrating, he created several fireballs, shaping them as eagles and sending them after one of their remaining opponents. Kobalt imitated him, sending giants bees made of ice at another one.

Lightly touching his Athar mark, he concentrated on Kobalt.

*Kobalt, Lightning move on the Azurean.*

He barely managed to keep his hold on Rexeran's neck as the Sowaroc suddenly swerved to the right.

Sorry Astyan

Don't worry, you spared me a embarrassing fall...>

Looking around, he saw Teneb and the two riders still in were regrouping, most probably to try a last resort attack.

One of them was tailed by Kobalt and was about to met a rather painful electricity curse which, given the fact that rider and dragon were soaked with water, curtesy of Kobalt, would put him out of commission. That left Teneb and a rider which was trying to attack while being chased by Kobalt bees.

Harry and Teneb started to duel in earnest exchanging, curses and hexes while flying around each other.

The young wizard flattened himself on the Sowaroc's neck, avoiding Gae's claws and two daggers thrown his way.

Harry looked at the sky, feeling a bit cold as the sun had started to play hide and seek behind the clouds. Not feeling like getting soaked, he decided to end this quickly.

Sensing his riders thought, Rexeran swerved on the right and popped them out. They reappeared several meters above Teneb. Not wasting time, he jumped, Rexeran hovering next to him.



Harry had to refrain from smiling. The Sowaroc hadn't like this idea at all.

I still don't like it, Astyan....

Don't worry, Rexeran, it will work...>

The Dragon didn't answer, but Harry could feel his reluctantness.

Harry was falling, hidden under an invisibility and silencing charm. He quickly transformed into his raven form, before landing smoothly on Gae's back. He turned back to his human appearance and immediately raised his sword to block the two daggers that had come his way. Barely managing to keep his balance as Gae started to try to shake him off her back.

Teneb had stood up as well, sword unsheathed.

"I didn't expect that one, Harry...."

Harry just smiled and brought his sword down.

"Always happy to surprise."

Teneb locked both their swords.

"But how are you going to win? Gae is not going to cooperate."

Harry just smirk and stepped back, slashing his sword at Teneb who crouched down, avoiding the blade, while throwing one of his knives.

The young wizard side stepped the small weapon, checking on the powering of his sword. Just a few more seconds and he would be able to channel power through it.

Waving his hand, he shot a blasting curse at the elf which rebounded on his shield. Needing to distract his friend, he summoned several fire balls, no bigger than snitches. They shot towards the young elf, attacking him like angered bees.

As Teneb froze and repelled them, Harry finished his blade's powering. Finally he felt the tell-tale tingle course through him. With a



smile, he channeled his magic through the weapon, slashing from right to left, creating a crescent shaped blast of magic that caught Teneb unaware.

The young elf stumbled backwards, barely managing to stop himself from falling from his dragon. Gae let out a roar of warning, twisting her head and shooting a blast of fire at the young wizard. Harry dodged it, but not without losing his footing. Feeling himself fall, he decided he wasn't going to lose this fight. With a flick of his hand, ropes shot forwards, ensnaring his friend. Taking out a small vial, he threw it at a struggling Teneb who had already managed to get rid of half of his bonds. He smugly watched the vapor escape the stain on the elf's robe.

Seconds later, he was falling from Gae's back, but not without witnessing Teneb crumble, unconscious and fall from the Emnag's back, only to be caught deftly in the claws of the silver scaled female dragon.

He felt Rexeran dove under him and rise up to meet him. He hit the Sowartoc's back, easily settling himself in his usual riding place.

*Athar, we got the rest of them...*

Harry had no problem recognizing Kobalt's mental voice.

*Alright, everyone go back to the Headquarters, take care of those in need of help. I'll meet you there. Good job everyone.*

Harry softly caressed Rexeran's back.

"Thank you Rexeran."

The Dragon elder shot him a draconian smile.

This is what riders and dragons do, Astyan...

"Let's land, so I can revive Teneb, I don't think Gae will be happy with me otherwise."



The Sowaroc's amusement was evident as they flew in lazy circles back to the grounds. Harry gracefully jumped off Rexeran's back, walking quickly towards the glowering Emnag.

That was a reckless move, young Astyan, she said with a scolding tone.

"Maybe, but it served its purpose..."

True as it might be, you need to more cautious when it comes to your safety. Chances are that Rexeran might have not caught you in time...

"I'd trust Rexeran with my life. He will never let me fall."

Saying that, Harry knelt next to Teneb as he uncorked another vial, forcing his friend to inhale the gas coming out of it.

A few moments later, Teneb blinked a few times before coming back to reality. He looked up at Harry, not missing his friend's smug expression.

"Well, I guess, this is another victory to your account... No need to look so happy!"

"Sore loser," said Harry, handing the elf his hand and pulling him to his feet. "Come on, let's go."

Teneb rolled his eyes.

They both transformed into their feline forms. While Harry was nearly done with his phoenix form, only needing to hone the actual transformation and making faster and smoother, none of them had started on their Dragon forms, remembering their guardians' warnings about that. The temptation to attempt it was strong, but the consequences, should something happen were too dire to allow them to try.

Both of them silently made their way towards the headquarters, avoiding other riders and morphing back to their human or elfish forms.



They did not want their abilities to be known more than it needed to be.

They quickly went to the rooms reserved for the Athars to shower and change before going to the counsel room dressed in simple brown pants and brown leather tunic. Harry sat down in the chair he had dubbed as his during the past two weeks. Several folders, maps were piled in front of his chair. Harry wanted nothing more than shred some of those to pieces.

Teneb didn't have it any better. The young Elf extended his hand and activated a small orb in the middle of the room.

"Athars?"

"Demenor," answered Teneb, reading other a report at the same time.

Harry frowned at the face of the riders' leader.

"What's the matter, Demenor?" he asked, a bit harshly.

The older Elf sighed wearily.

"Geryan's troops were finally sighted. They are at Ynris and a day travel from High Duke Iral's city."

"How many?" asked Teneb with a clipped tone. His mother was born in Ynris and he had often been there to see his grandparents.

"Our spies didn't manage to get precise information regarding that particular piece of information. But the reports talk of a large army, composed of Elfs, Magis and Elementals."

Teneb sighed.

"We'll be there in two hours, Demenor. Seven wings will come with the Queen' army, three will stay under Harry's command at Horevald while one will remain here to foreward any message or report that might arrive here."

Demenor nodded.



“Very well. Valera will stay at Horevald and Celen will lead the armies. The Elite and a regiment will also remain behind to assure the city’s security.”

Teneb raised his eyebrows.

“The Queen agreed to that.”

The older rider rolled his eyes.

“After a two-hour argument. Now, we need you to bring some of the Headquarters reserves with you...”

The talk turned quickly towards logistics, much to Harry’s disgruntlement.

One hour later, they left the room, grim expressions etched on their faces. They slowly walked toward the dining hall, needing to address the riders.

They entered and quietly made their way to the High Table. The silence fell slowly as people noticed their stony faces and realized something had happened. By the time, they reached their table, no sound could be heard in the room.

Teneb started to speak.

“Geryan is about to attack Ynris.”

Immediately shouts and chatter broke through the room, despite Teneb’s efforts to bring back order. Finally Harry waved his hand creating a small explosion, shutting up everyone.

“Better.”

Teneb resumed his speech.

“As I said, Geryan is about to attack Ynris and we will take part in the battle.” He raised his hand, putting a stop to shouts.

“Our primary mission will be to cover the Queen’s troops who will be led by Prince Celen, as well as assure their defense. We are to attack



only in last resort. Is that clear?" His tone was cold, but he needed to get this message understood. He didn't want hot-headed idiots to start shooting curses left and right.

"Six wings, in addition to mine will go with the troops, two will stay at Horevald with Athar Harry's team. One will stay here. I won't choose for you but will leave that for your wing leaders to decide. I want their choice in an hour. Those assigned to Horevald or the army will need to be ready to leave in three hours."

That said, ignoring the shouts and heated talks going on in the Dining Hall, they headed for the kitchens, then the reserves. Both of them talked with the cooks and the intendants regarding what they needed to be taken with them. They were walking for the armory when a rider caught up with them.

"Athars, we chose our posts."

Teneb nodded, taking the paper and reading it over.

"Harry, you'll have Nora's wing as well as Sindhar's. Hiram will stay here with his team, the rest is coming with me."

The young wizard nodded and turned towards the rider.

"Very well, Inda, tell everyone to be ready to leave in a bit more than two hours."

The elf female did a double take at being recognized. Sending a troubled look at the young human, she nodded and left while Harry and Teneb entered the armory, talking quickly with the man in charge of the weapon reserves of the Headquarters. An hour later they were out and walking to their rooms to get ready and then oversee the transfers to Horevald, helping with the anchoring of the portals.

Harry cursed as the storm he had seen brewing decided to break. Rain started to fall gently then more harshly. Finally when their last envoy had been sent through the portal which was then closed, they watched as the riders got ready, securing their bags to the back of their dragons, checking on the ropes so as not to harm their bonded.



They then climbed on the Dragons and wing after wing, all of them took flight before disappearing in a blink of an eye.

Harry and Teneb were among the last to leave and it was with relief that he felt Rexeran take them away from the riders' island and the rain and to a sunny sky, just above Horevald.

The palace's landscape had quite changed from Harry's last stay.

Troops were camping everywhere on the grounds, soldiers running around or practicing, horse riders exercising their mounts, the sound of metal hitting metal and shouts filling the air.

The Dragons had landed in a large clearing and the riders were starting to set up their camps.

Harry and Teneb nodded to Kobalt and Opheria before flying to the castle. The night was spent talking with the various generals of the Queen's army and intendants. Harry spoke very little, listening attentively and trying to guess the reason behind Geryan's decision to strike Ynris first.

The inhabitants of this island were pacific people, mostly turned toward the study of their powers of the service of their gods. They rarely got involved in politics, preferring to stay out of the political conflicts. There was no real army there, just a regiment whose main role was to take care of the odd dangerous creature or plant that appeared from time to time. So why send so many men there?

Sure, there were the power stones of the temples. But Geryan was an elf and his popularity would be reduced to nil if he stole the temples, not to mention he would have to get rid of the Deisers and Djoiras first.

It could be a diversion, but even then, the dragons could be back at Horevald in a heartbeat and portals took little time to set up, even if they were harder and harder to anchor.

The meeting lasted till late in the night before Valera dismissed everyone. Harry pensively walked back to his suite of rooms.



“What has you that thoughtful, Harry?” finally asked Teneb.

“I just don’t understand. Why Ynris?”

Teneb sighed.

“We’d all like to know. It doesn’t make a lot of sense...”

“There’s something going on, you’ll have to be careful. Who knows what kind of thing he planned for you there.”

The elf shook his head.

“You’re being a bit too pessimistic about this Harry.”

The young wizard shrugged.

“Maybe I am, but I would have like us to have a second team sent there to gather more intelligence...”

“There wasn’t enough time, you know that as well as me.”

Harry just sighed.

“True, but I think it would have been better if we could have had better intelligence regarding the number of soldiers there or the weapons they have.”

Knowing he wouldn’t have the last word, Teneb chose not to reply.

They parted before the doors of their respective suites. Harry changed to comfortable cotton shorts and took out the Flame of Sardhog from the purse tied to his belt.

Taking it in his hand, he quickly activated it, asking to speak with Terio.

After a few moments, the tired voice of the dwarf was heard.

*“Harry?”*



"Sorry to call you that late, Terio, but I wanted to know how you were."

*"That's not the only thing, I'm sure..."*

"Not really, you sound tired"

*"A dwarf is never tired, I'm just a bit busy, that's all. The vampires doubled their original order, the goblins contacted us to arm their assassination squadrons. I can tell you that that order did not go over well at first. A delegation of gobgob spent a week talking with the King and his counsellors..."*

"I assume they reached an agreement."

*"That they did. A treaty, plus this order and a contract to check on their undergrounds structure as well as the rebuilding of that bank of yours that collapsed..."*

"Good. Do you have news of my world?"

*"Not much to tell. That lunatic you call a Dark Lord has been quiet: a few attacks here and there, some unexplained disappearance, but nothing major... Your friends are holding their ground well."*

Harry was relieved. He had tried to call them several times, but they had never answered him. That hurt but had not stopped him from worrying about them.

"Thanks Terio."

*"No problem, wizard, and what is going on on your side, I heard that Valera was sending her troops to Ynris?"*

"She is, Teneb is leading the wings there, I'm staying at Horewald with three of them."

*"Tell the grass-lover to be careful. There's something fishy going there. There were a lot of magical disturbances and diggings up there for the past week."*



"I fear so, but here they are adamant about not waiting for a second team to be sent..."

*"They're playing a dangerous game here.... Tell the leaf-eater to be careful, our game is still on and I'm not about to take his death as the end of it..."*

"Your interest in his well-being will warm his heart I'm sure..."

A gruff laugh echoed in the room.

*"I'm sure it will...By the way Adrien sends his greetings and warn you he sent some of his men to watch over Hogwarts and that vampires would help in case of an attack. He made a deal with your leader."*

"Thanks him for me, will you?"

*"I'll be sure to do so if that walking corpse comes this way."*

"I'm not sure he would appreciate the comment," laughed Harry.

*"He has to have heard worse..."*

"You're probably right. Well, I'm going to end this call, thanks a lot for your information, Terio.

*"No need, wizard, take care and be cautious in the coming days."*

"I will be, take care too. Strength and Wealth."

*"Strength and Wealth."*

The flame went dead and Harry slumped on his bed... He had the feeling that things were not going to go according to their plans...

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Teneb left the next day, early in the morning. Harry watch from the top of the west wall as the silver Dragon took flight, wings taking their position behind him, before they all popped away, leaving only an empty sky as the sun rose from behind the forest trees.



He spent the day looking over Atharnia's maps and the reports regarding the intendance. Finally growing quickly fed up with reading over the same papers all the time he headed for the stables.

He met Erin on his way to Shadow's stable.

"Athar!"

Harry rolled his eyes.

"You can call me Harry, after all I'm not that older than you..."

The younger elf looked at him with wide eyes.

"I-I couldn't, sir, I-I mean, I..."

Harry raised his hand.

"Alright, calm down. Just call me what you're most comfortable with."

"Yes, Athar. Were you going to ride your stallion?"

Harry nodded.

"Yes, is there a problem?"

The stable hand shook his head.

"Not at all, I worked him this morning as usual."

"Good, thanks for your work."

Erin flushed a little.

"It's a pleasure to ride him."

Harry grinned.

"Indeed, it is."

Nodding to the teen, he fetched the stallion's equipment. Twenty minutes later, he was out, walking calmly towards the forest, intent on



forgetting everything for a few moments. He came back two hours later as dusk started to settle on the country.

After taking care of Shadow, checking his body for injuries or bugs and his hooves for small rocks, he made his way back to the castle. Ordering a light dinner to his room, he then went to the meeting room and worked on a few reports before going to sleep.

The next days followed the same pattern: he would wake up at dawn, train Shadow with Erin, go back to work with Valera's men and check on the city's defenses. The afternoon was for his training with his riders and the army, just before dinner, he would contact Teneb.

The army had arrived safely, but Geryan's troops were playing hide and seek with them. Except for small fights, no battle had taken place. Nobody seemed to understand the reasons behind Geryan's moves.

It had been nearly a week since the army had left and Harry was growing restless. He was really feeling useless.

Valera found him pacing on top of the outer wall.

"Growing bored, Athar?"

Harry didn't answered at first, watching as the sun fell behind the horizon line.

"Why did you call me back, your Majesty," he asked quietly.

Valera leaned against the edge.

"Call it foresight, or intuition, but I knew you were going to be needed, that you had to be there... There were a few Seers in my family though I inherited very little of that gift. But I knew I had to call you back."

Harry turned to her.

"You know I will only stay here for a week, maybe two at most if nothing happens."



The Queen nodded.

“Teneb told me he had given you his word and I will not oppose it.”

They watched in silence as the soldiers started to retreat to their tents.

Valera tightened her shawl around her shoulders.

“Did you read the diary I lent you?”

Harry looked at her, frowning slightly.

“The Pendragon was not a wizard but he was taught by Merlin. The old magician was wise and taught him many things. Maybe the answer you seek is concealed in its pages. Solyen knows the old man had a lot of secrets.”

Harry nodded thoughtfully.

“Good night, Athar; May Lunai guard your dream.”

“May she guard yours.”

With a tilt of her head, the Queen walked back inside, leaving Harry to his star-gazing.

Finally after five minutes, the young wizard, turned and headed back to his suite, having found no answers to his questions.

Once changed for the night, he rummaged through his bag, looking for the diary. He found it hidden under a pile of shirts. Unlocking it, and taking a quill charmed to never run out of ink, he started to write down a question that had been plaguing him.

*Do you know anything about the Enchanter and his descent?*

The diary shone a little as it always did when answering. Fine curvy letters started to appear.

Yes

Throat tightened, Harry wrote quickly his next question.



Can you tell me all you know about them?

Suddenly the pages started to turn as if blown by a strong wind before stopping brutally.

Lettering started to cover the pages.

*The Enchanter: Myth or Reality?*

*Many tales speak of the Enchanter and of his powers. This character was seen for centuries before disappearing mysteriously, never to be seen again. Many have tried to pierce the veil covering the disparition of a man that was heralded as the more powerful individual of this Age. His powers had no comparison, nor did his knowledge of them.*

*The Enchanter had one son, whose name was lost through time. Despite being gifted with several abilities of great powers, this son didn't come close in the slightest to the level of power his sire had wielded. Generations after Generations, the blood of the Enchanter was transmitted from father to son. It was a characteristic of the family that only one heir was sired. The mother always gave birth to a son; never a daughter was born from the line until millenia later.*

*By this time, the name of the Enchanter had become the subject of legend as very few people thought it possible for a person to wield such powers. It was then than a daughter was born. The Enchanter's heir of that time had chosen to wed a fair maiden who unknowingly descended from a line which, while not as powerful as her husbands', was not to be dismissed. Morgian Le Fay's heiresses had always given birth to daughters. From the union of those two lines were born twins.*

*During the three generations that followed, a pair of twin was birthed by each heirs. It was only on the fourth generations that the ritual birth of one son or one daughter to the line reappeared again.*

*There exist then sixteen families descending from the Enchanter.*

The writing stopped, indicating that no new information had been added to this subject. A family tree then etched on the following pages.



Immediately Harry took the stone linked to the one he had left to Hermione as well as a few others.

“Adessa Hermione.”

The stone glowed pink.

“Hermione?”

Nobody answered.

“Hermione, if you’re here answer me!”

Still nothing.

“Alright, I hope you’re not too angry with me that you won’t check on the stone. Listen, I need everything you can find on the sixteen families descending from Morgain Le Fay. It’s really important. If you want you can send me copies of the documents. Just place the stone over the page you want to send and say Kera. Thanks a lot in advance. I hope you are fine. Send me a message if things are getting worse, no matter what I’ll help in anyway I can. Odal”

The stone’s glow dimmed slowly. This night Harry’s dreams were filled with nightmarish visions of Morgain, Voldemort, and Luctan.

He woke up early as usual, but not as rested as he should. Hermione hadn’t called back and that worried him more and more. The only thing that prevented him from going back to his former school was Terio’s assurance that Adrien’s men were watching over the building and its inhabitants. He changed and started on his routine. The next days did nothing to alleviate his fears. Hermione was still not answering him and this waiting for Teneb’s reports was getting to his already tried nerves.

On October’s the tenth, he woke up even earlier than he used to. The stone on his desk was glowing brightly; bathing the whole room in a blinding blue light, Teneb’s color. Harry’s mind immediately cleared.

“Adessa Teneb,” he snapped, changing at the same time.



“Harry!”

“Yes? What’s the matter, Teneb?”

“The whole thing was a decoy!” snarled the elf.

Harry’s eyes widened.

“What!”

“You were right to say something was going on. There are no more army here than ice in the Sun. We caught a regiment loyal to Geryan and they spilled everything after a questioning. The army that was spotted was a clever illusion. They transformed horses, rabbit, dogs, cats into men for a few hours and cast a few enchantments to make their number triple. The raids were organized to keep us busy.”

Harry cursed loudly, mind racing as he buckled his belt, and fastened his cloak over his tunic he had dressed in full Athar regalia this time.

“Damnit, I knew we should have sent another team...”

“Harry, what is done is done, I’m sending back all the wings as I speak, the troops will follow in an hour, two at most. Get the castle ready and on alert, the people to safety and prepare yourself to an imminent attack.”

“With the wings we should manage to hold up for some time...” Harry was already thinking of what needed to be done. Suddenly heavy cursing from Teneb bring him back to reality.

“Teneb?”

There was a few moment of silence.

“Harry, we have a problem...”

Dread filled the young wizard at that comment.

“What! Teneb, what is going on!”



“That-That bastard raised a force field around Ynris, we can’t leave. The first wing that left minute ago just came back... It’s not pretty... They look like they ran into a wall at full speed.” Teneb’s voice was tensed.

“But then...” Harry did not want to say it.

“It looks like, you’ll have to do without us for a while...”

Harry bit his lip to stop himself from screaming.

“Teneb, Terio reported some strange diggings around Ynris...”

There was a pause as Teneb listened to him.

“That must be the focuses. If we managed to find at least half of them, we should be able to deactivate the force-field.”

“I’ll call Terio to see if he can do anything about it.”

“Alright. We’ll start scanning the Island with the help of the temples and the inhabitants.”

There was a small moment of silence.

“Harry. Be careful, please.”

Harry closed his eyes.

“I will Teneb, I will... But be quick.”

“I’ll try.”

“Odal,” said quietly Harry, watching as the stone’s light faded. He brought his hand to his mark on his temple, focusing on all the riders present at Horevald.

*Attention, Geryan is approaching the castle. I want you to get ready. Send a intelligence team to get some data on his army, concentrate on his numbers, his weapons and his magical offensive capacity. Nora, get your wing to help the evacuation of the villages. Sindhar,*



*check the defences, look for weakening charms, spying devices. Kobalt, assist Nora.*

There were no protestation from them, just a quiet agreement. A bit surprised, Harry closed the link to them and looked outside. It would be a nice day. A shame such day would witness a battle...

Snapping out of his thoughts, he sent a message to Terio, asking the dwarf to see if he could lend a hand to Teneb or not, then left his suite and stormed to the meeting room.

Valera was already there with a few people.

"Your Majesty, I received a communication from Athar Teneb. Ynris was a diversion, there is no army there, and I think we can expect an attack very soon."

He saw the disbelief on several faces and knew not all of them would believe him. Damn them! Couldn't they see that there wasn't time!

At that moment, while Harry was about to hex the first to say he was dramatizing, a soldier irrupted in the room, panting.

"Y-Your Majesty, Geryan's army is approaching. They have reached Okaline and are marching on Horevald."

Harry felt his inside turn cold. Okaline was an hour from Horevald, give it three at best since the army moved slower.

Cries of dismay started to be heard in the room, much to Harry's anger. He came and told him, they did not believe him, a unnamed soldier said the same thing and nobody doubted his word. The Queen tried to bring back order, but the counsellor were shouting orders left and right.

Finally, enough was enough. Harry cast a sonorus on his throat.

"SHUT UP!"

Slience followed, startled eyes fixed on him.



“Finite incantatem.” He turned to the soldier. “You, go straight to General Jihar, tell him to alert all his men. They need to bring the people of the nearby village to the palace and prepare the defences. I’d like to meet him at the main doors in fifteen minutes.”

The soldier seemed happy to receive a clear order and didn’t protest, leaving quickly the room.

“Your Majesty, I’ll survey the defence of the castle with General Jihar and Elite Hysten. I’ll leave you to devise the plans to follow with your counsellors.”

Harry paid no heed to the calls of those in the room as he swept out. He had not time to lose in petty talks. He quickly dodged the people running in the corridors. He stopped an herald and asked him to get Elite Hysten and bring him to the doors in ten minutes.

He walked out in the courtyard, only to be confronted to the picture of utter chaos. People were running from everywhere, women were trying to comfort crying children when they were not crying themselves, some of them had brought some personal effect, others seemed to have come with only the clothes they were wearing.

Soldiers were running half equipped, horses and their riders barely avoided hitting people.

Taking a deep breath, Harry walked out, his blood red robes catching the eyes of many people. He ignored the eyes following him, both the hopeful and the angry ones.

He stopped at the door, sighting General Jihar looking around for him. During all his time at Horevald, Jihar had been the only to paid attention to his suggestion. The man was very tall and burly and had been aptely nicknamed The Bull. He rarely paid any attention to protocole and didn’t embarassed himself with niceties. Piercing grey eyes which demented his image of brainless gorilla, square features, a mop of brown hair he cut short contrary to the habit of the elves, he was dressed in the blue and silver uniform of Horevald’s soldiers, covered by his plate or armor, the red band with a golden sun on his arm showing his rank.



“Athar,” he said tersely.

“General,” replied Harry dryly, “Elite Hysten will join us in a minute.”

As he said that, a man dressed in silver and black strode to the door. He had a lithe athletic body, a deceitfully frail appearance, enforced by his fine features, large blue eyes and long blond hair. But Harry knew for having sparred with the man a few times that he was a force to reckon with with a blade in his hand.

“Hysten,” said gruffly Jihar. There had always been a sort of sibling rivalry between the two. But the gods protect the fool who would insult one of them before the other.

“Jihar,” nodded the Elite leader with a calm and composed voice, “Athar.”

Harry nodded back.

“I assume you both heard the news. The Queen is currently dealing with the counsellors and keeping them out of our way, so we need to organize the defence of the city.”

Jihar shot a scornful glance around him.

“Well, you’ll have to get those people to stop running along like headless chickens first.”

Harry smirked and flicked his hand to his throat.

“Sonorus.”

Hysten and Jihar’s eyes widened and they hastily cast deafening charms on themselves.

“ATTENTION EVERYONE!”

Harry’s shout stilled everyone. Lowering the volume of his voice he continued.



“Geryan is marching on Horevald. I’ll ask all the soldiers to go to their post or report to their commanders. The refugees need to designate a few representatives that will help with the organization.”

He cast the charm on Jihar and Hysten.

“To all of those who were running around like scared babies, I want to see all of you at your post, armed and correctly dressed in three minutes. The ones who are found slacking off won’t like what will happen, is that clear!”

All the soldiers saluted and started to run to their post, this time in a more ordered fashion, faces set.

“Elite, I want the two of you on duty to go to the council room immediately and not leave the Queen, six others are to start taking the names of the refugees. The rest of you is expected at his or her post as soon as possible,” stated Hysten calmly.”

Harry took off the charm.

“Handy that spell, you’ll have to show me how you do it...” said Jihar with a pensieve look.

Harry rolled his eyes.

“Once this is over. I sent two wings to help with the evacuation so be prepared for an afflux of villagers in the coming hour. Sindhar is checking the area for sabotage.”

“Good,” said Hysten, blue eyes looking at Harry. “What of the troops sent to Ynris? We won’t manage to resist for too long without reinforcements.”

Harry closed his eyes for a few seconds before returning the Elf’s stare.

“Don’t count of them. Geryan trapped them on the island with a force-field. It could take them days if not weeks to disable enough focuses to pass through it. A whole wing was injured trying to cross it.”



Jihar's face darkened.

"That's treachery... We have no chance of winning an open battle."

Harry shook his head.

"True, that's why we need to avoid such a confrontation for as long as we can. Elite, your men were done with the booby trapping?"

Hysten nodded with a smirk.

"We finished it two days ago. Geryan will have a few surprise if he's been expecting an easy approach."

Jihar and Harry smirked back.

"Perfect. The riders will try to slow them as much as possible and should the palace be assieged, we will try to incapacite his troops as much as possible."

"My men knows what to do..." said the General.

"As do mine," agreed Hysten.

They parted, agreeing to meet again. Once the villages' evacuation would be finished. For the following two hours, Harry helped as soldiers readied the castle for an attack. The young wizard joined his wing, helping with the evacuation, his heart growing cold as he helped transport sobbing women that were forced to abandon their house behind, only able to pack a few things and heirlooms, only leaving with the hope that she might find something left once everything would be over.

Once they were sure they had got everyone they could and as Geryan's army was seen barely thirty minutes away from the castle, they did a last check of the area and flew back to the castle.

He climbed off Rexeran, asking the Sowaroc to contact him should something happen.

Hysten and Jihar were waiting for him at the entrance of the palace.



“Everything is ready. Now, whatever happens is in the hands of the gods.”

“If you say so. I prefer to believe it is in our hands,” replied Harry, weary. “I’m going to raise the wards with your help if you agree. I’ll key you as well. Only one of us will be able to bring them down.”

Harry’s gaze pierced them.

“You honor us with your trust, Athar,” replied Hysten quietly.

Valera had promoted him to the leadership of the Elite soon after being named Queen. Hysten had completely revised the criteria regarding the enrolment. He had got rid of those that entered the group through their connections and had rewarded young men he had trained while he had been the captain of the Queen’s guards.

He was born at Ynris and had come with the Queen when she had been called to Horevald to wed the late King. Harry had appreciated his professional attitude and had adopted the same detached behavior.

Harry sent him a strained smile before motioning to them to follow him.

He led them to an hidden room under the Western tower, after deactivating several wards him and Teneb had erected with the help of the Xhan and the Xhana. Jihar watched with wide eyes, quite the strange face for him.

A big power stone was glowing slightly in the semi darkness, bathing the crypte, giving it an unearthly glow as the moss on the wall reflected it a little. The air was a bit damp and chilly, but Harry paid no heed to it, as he started to chant lightly, silver lines of power starting to appear on the walls, grounds and ceiling, spreading, curling and twisting.

“This is the power stone at the heart of all the wards and enchantments in the castle. Very few ever saw it.” Harry’s voice seemed distant.



Jihar and Hysten watched, with surprised and a little awe as the human started to chant, spinning the humongous powers coursing around the three of them. Jihar repressed a shiver as he felt the magic crawling on his skin.

“Athar?”

Harry turned to them, his eyes blazing, their green intensity piercing through them. Uncomfortable, Hysten shifted on his feet, unable to look away.

“I will need you to cut your hand and put it on the altar. Do not speak.”

Both elves did not protest and complied quickly. For the first time, they truly saw the power the human Athar possessed.

The lights turned slightly blue as Harry’s chant grew louder. There was a flash that blinded all of them for a few seconds then their vision slowly returned.

Jihar and Hysten shot nervous looks around, as the young wizard remained standing, his back turned to them.

“The wards are up, let’s leave,” finally announced Harry, much to the other two’s relief.

As they exited the crypte, Harry raised back all the wards that had been protecting the stone, checking them carefully to make sure they weren’t tampered with.

The three men came out, blinking in the sunlight to reacquaint their eyes to the light.

“You’ll be able to disable the wards from the outside, You’ll just have to touch them with your intent clear in your mind. They will recognize you and obey your command.”

After a few more minutes of talking, they each went back to their respective posts. Harry hurried to the dragonriders, outside of the castle.



All the riders looked at him as he approached Rexeran, leaning against the Sowaroc. The young wizard then faced them.

"I need to know now if any of you has a problem with me being in charge. Teneb and the other wings won't be able to quickly come to our aid. So if we want to be efficient, we don't need to waste time in pointless arguments. If you feel you won't be able to trust my orders, say so, and I'll withdraw."

The riders looked at each other before nodding to their wing leaders.

"There won't be any problem, Athar. You went over your plans with our Second and us and we all agreed to them. Unless you prove yourself unfit to command us, we'll follow you." A few riders mumbled at that, quickly silenced by their peers.

Harry tilted his head in thanks. Funny how war managed to change people's views...

"Alright, then, you all know what to do, we're going to make Geryan regret ever thinking of attacking Horevald. I don't need to remind you not to kill unless in a last resort situation. Apart from that, use every trick up your sleeves."

All the riders nodded somberly.

Crouching on the grounds, Harry started to draw figures in the dirt.

"From the report your team sent me, Sindhar, we have about two thousands soldiers approaching. Reinforcements are to be expected and I want a watch to be organized on the river as well. Add about two hundred horse riders to that number. From what they could see, they have the materials for the construction of several assault towers to attack the walls, catapults and several other magical massive destruction weapons. We need to get rid of as many as possible. Mind your aim. The convoys transporting them are very well warded, but I think that Draconian fires will go through. They are escorted by one regiment each. The dragons sensed at least four power stones, so we need to try to at least find where they are kept. Be careful, stay under a disillusionment charm and keep moving. Have your shields up at all times. If you are hit or incapacitate, come back here. I don't



want foolish heroics, save that for later, you'll do no good if you're stuck in the Healing Houses. Questions?"

Silence.

"Good, May the Nine bless you," finished Harry, putting on his helmet and checking his protections.

The sixty riders all climbed on their bonded and took flight, all of them heading for Geryan's army. Harry watched, worried as they flew over the hundreds of soldiers Geryan had brought with him. How were they going to manage to resist until Teneb's arrival?

Touching his mark, he focused on the sixty dragons following him.

*You know what to do, good luck and be careful.*

That said, his mind merged with Rexeran's he felt them dove and swept above several convoys of siege's tools.

Let's go, Rexeran.>

The Sowaroc opened his mouth and a tongue of fire escaped, hitting the convoy straight on. The wards didn't hold against dragon's fire and the soldiers around screamed as the wood started to burn. Not slowing down, they hit a second one and a third before rising up, readying for a second passage. He could see several convoys burning happily and blue haired people running to them. Harry rolled his eyes, Water Elementals... well, he wished them luck, stuffing draconian fires out asked for a lot of power and would leave them drained for a few days.

Seeing catapults' parts, Rexeran and him dove again. This time, they got two convoys and Harry threw several vials of a particular explosive potion, curtesy of Neville's mishaps in Potions. He had brewed several cauldrons of the concoction that had been supposed to have been a simple fertilizer at the beginning.

Hearing other blasts, he knew he hadn't been the only one to use them.



It was too easy... Harry couldn't help feeling that it was way too easy. Geryan should have known that a few wings would stay behind. He had to know of the Dragons' powers.

*Sindhar, take your wing, check the area around the castle. Have an air Elemental scan it too... I have a bad feeling about this whole thing...*

Meanwhile Rexeran and Harry kept on setting convoys aflame.

*Athar, Rensha says that a large corridor is being occluded from her vision. Enchantments and Air Manipulation combined from what she can says.*

"Shit," cursed Harry, understanding what Geryan was trying to do.

*Nora, keep on delaying them... The others with me, that sly snake got one on us. Appear above the castle.*

They complied and soon Harry found himself flying high above Horevald. Heightening his magical awareness, Harry noticed what he had passed as a small disturbance was in reality a cleverly thought occluding veil. A circle of four mages and at least three Air-Elementals had weaved their power together to form the veil. To anybody, there was nothing there except for trees, grass, flower and bugs. Their weaving was so tight and well done that to a simple scan it would appear as a slight natural disturbance, a sequelae of a past magical blast, nothing to worry about. Harry had to hand that to those who had done this, it was a real masterpiece.

Now, how could he get that down?

He scanned it.

That would be tricky... He could only work on the magical part, having no gift for Air. But if he could get that part out of the way, the Air-Elementals and the Wiscands would probably be able to dispel the rest.

Rexeran, any idea? >



The Sowaroc stayed silent for a few minutes.

I think I can unweave the magical part, but I'd need to be in charge. This level of magical manipulation is still out of your reach. You have the power but not yet the skills to harness it completely.

Harry shrugged. He trusted Rexeran with his life.

What do I need to do?>

Just let me take charge, Astyan. You will learn in time to do what I'm about to do. You were always a powerful magical wielder, one of the most powerful.

Harry snorted.

No time for flattery, Rexeran.>

Let all your barriers down, fall in a light trance and don't try to fight me.

Harry was uncomfortable to let his mental shields down. It was something he rarely did nowadays, it always left him feeling extremely vulnerable. But he knew that the Sowaroc would never abuse his trust. Carefully, sensing the Dragon's inner magic surround him protectively, he bared his mind out to his bonded.

He didn't really understand what the Sowaroc was doing. It was strange. He felt completely disconnected from his body, from his magic, from everything: he was just a simple spectator.

Rexeran seemed to will their combined magic into the veil surrounding what was probably a part of Geryan's army. Then, the dragon drew on both of their strength and the magic seemed to change... Harry would have frowned if he could have... A magical mutation? He didn't know it was even possible.!

He could feel minuscule shifts in the magical flows, some barely perceptible. At one point, Rexeran started to drain their magic in the ground and Harry was surprised to see the magic that had been woven in the veil follow. Once everything had disappeared in the grounds, he felt Rexeran call it back to them.



One minute later, he felt his Dragon smoothly unweave their magic.

Rexeran... It was incredible....> he whispered through their bond, awe filling his mental voice.

The Sowaroc sent him an amused feeling.

You will be able to do that soon, Astyan, that and so much more...

Really?>

Yes, you will... But now is not the time.

Harry returned his attention to the situation at hand.

*Rensha, can you take care of the rest of that veil?*

He felt his mark tingle slightly, indicating the message was being transmitted.

*We're going to try, Athar.*

He saw the six Wiscands present gather, as well as the seven Air-Elementals. He did not pay attention to what they were doing, looking intently at the spot covered by the veil.

Suddenly there was a flicker before his eyes. Squinting his eyes, he watched as it flickered strongly once more, twice and then disappeared in a blink of an eye.

Harry's eyes widened as he took in the scene unfolding before him.

"Shit."

oooooooooooooooooooooooo



## Chapter Thirty:

## From Charybde to Scylla.

*Harry's eyes widened as he took in the scene unfolding before him.*

*“Shit.”*

000000000000000000000000

Fifteen catapults and five ballistae were standing in firing-range. Ten assault towers were already built and advancing on the city walls, three thousands soldiers amongst whom rode five hundred riders.

Harry cursed again... Geryan was good and they underestimated him... Now they would have to deal with it. First, the catapults and balistes had to go. Harry knew the ward protecting the castle would hold against most of the attacks. But he didn't know what their opponent had in store. Maybe the man had thought of a way to shatter it or drain it away. It would be difficult, to completely empty the power stone; but Harry was sure that should someone put his or her mind to it, something would be found.

*Sindhra, try to get rid of the ballistae, but mind the archers. Have your shields up and stay alert and moving.*

*The others, follow me, we have to try to get rid of those catapults.*

Harry flew, Kobalt and the rest of his wings behind him. They swept above them, their dragons shooting fires at them. Four started to burn, but as they were about to make a second passage, water walls were erected around seven of them, Harry glanced aside and noticed two ballistae were burning, thought they were quickly being shut off.

*Throw explosive and acid vials to the towers and catapults; use the rest of your blasting solution to try to disperse the soldiers.*

Harry led his team over the troops a few times; ducking the arrows sent their way as well as the curses and other elementals attacks.



Suddenly, Harry sensed a cry and saw a rider fall from his Dragon. Immediately, a dragon dove and caught him. Harry frowned.

*Jeesala, what happened?*

*I-I don't know... I was hit by something... it went straight through both my shields! I can't move my arm...*

Harry, behind you!

Harry spun his head sharply, casting a petrifying charm as a reflex. His eyes widened as it had no effect on the object coming straight for him. Quickly, he ducked, but not quickly enough. He gritted his teeth as whatever it was hit him in his shoulder.

He looked at it, it was an arrow. But with their shields it shouldn't have reach its aim. Harry had made sure that all of those under his command could raise shields against physical attack.

There are runes magic around it... Rexeran sounded worried.

Harry turned his head, wincing as the wound sent a jolt of pain.

"It must be a magic annulations combination." He touched his mark, focusing on the three wings currently fighting.

*To all the riders, beware of arrows and other physical attacks. They found a way to make them immune to magic wards. If you are disabled, go back to Horevald. If the situation gets too dangerous pull out. We will need all the fighters we have in the coming days.*

A few dragons popped away. Harry cast a numbing charm on his wound as well as a clotting one. He didn't dare taking out the arrow for now and would leave it to healers.

He dove again, taking several vials in his hand and throwing them as Rexeran flew over the troops, breathing fire at the catapults and the assault towers, as well as dispersing the soldiers under them.

Harry could see arrows rebounding on the Sowaroc's hide. Very little could pierce a dragon's skin.



He started to cast several curses as well, all of them meant to incapacitate. Rexeran suddenly made them pop away and reappear a few meters above as Harry saw a purple light head their way.

That had been a lacerating hex.

Suddenly the fight was taking a completely different perspective. The young wizard had hoped that Geryan hadn't wanted casualty and that the fight would be kept as clean as possible. But apparently the elf did not share the Queen's views on that matter.

Ten minutes later, Harry called for retreat. They had done everything they could and slowed Geryan's down a bit, seven catapults were completely destroyed, five would ask for heavy reparations before they could be used. Three ballistae were out of service amongst which only one was salvageable.

Harry did not know how many of their opponents' soldiers were out of commission, but that still left way too many attackers unharmed.

He flew back to Horevald with forty riders.

As soon as they landed, they were swarmed by on-lookers, well-wishers, healers and their assistants. Weary, Harry looked at Jihar who nodded and started to clear the area to allow the healers to work.

Rexeran, what of the dragons, do you need healers for those who were hit?>

Kind of you to ask, Astyan, but only four of the require intensive care, the others' wounds will be healed in a few hours. The other four will be sent back to our lands where they will be able to heal. They should be back in a week.

Is there something we can do?>

No, none of your magic will work. The Emnags are the only one able to heal severe wounds among our race.

Harry leaned against his dragon, a bit dizzy, but winced as his wound sent a new painful jolt through his body. He saw a few healers glance



at him before hurrying to tend to other wounded riders. His mind protesting the very idea of running after a healer, Harry decided to remain where he was and wait for someone to come.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Kobalt, Nora, her second Sharyle, Sindhar and his second Torin walked to him.

“Harry, there is no casualties. Four Dragons will be out of the field for a week at least and six riders won’t be able to fight for at least two weeks.”

Sindhar nodded.

“Those potions were a good idea.”

Harry nodded.

“I’ll brew another batch as soon as possible.”

Kobalt frowned.

“Not with this shoulder. How come no healer came to take care of it? It really doesn’t look good...”

The young wizard shot him a cynical look.

“They seem to be otherwise occupied or didn’t deem this wound grave enough to require their care, make your choice.”

Kobalt looked around and saw three healers talking quietly. His face darkened slightly and he was about to go fetch one by force when Hysten stopped him.

“If you can trust me to do it, I can heal your shoulder.”

Harry looked sharply at him then agreed quietly.

“Very well, do what you can; my own healing abilities are average at best.”

The elf motioned Nora to come.



“Hold him while I take out the arrow, it will hurt.” He said the last part looking at Harry. Casting a strong disinfecting charm on the weapon and the flesh surrounding the wound, he broke the arrow beneath the feathers and took hold of the head.

“I’ll pull on it on three. One, Two!” he tugged sharply on the arrow taking it out in one go. Harry sagged forwards a bit as he got the breath knocked out of him from the pain. Immediately, Hysten started to cast a cleaning charm, then a disinfecting and clotting one. Finally, he cast a minor healing enchantment, before conjuring some bandages. Taking out a vial filled with a clear light green liquid, he soaked the gauze with it and wrapped Harry’s shoulder with the strips of material. Conjuring a few more he quickly finished to dress the wound.

“That should do it. Refrain from abrupt movements for the coming hours and get rid of the bandage tomorrow morning. That might scar though.”

Harry shrugged.

“One more scar, that’s all... But that’s not important. Hysten, Jihar, is the castle ready for a full assault?”

“As ready as it will ever be,” answered the burly elf.

“Well, let’s hope it will be enough, Hysten, keep that arrow, I want the Queen’s scholars to look at those runes... My dragon told me that was why they managed to pierce our shields.”

The Elite’s leader nodded and straightened upon seeing a herald making his way towards them.

“The Queen requests your presence as soon as possible,” announced the messenger, face blank.

Without protest, they all followed him to the Counsel room. Valera had got rid of most of her advisors, only keeping those she trusted above all. She did not waste time in pleasantries.

“Athar, what can you tell us?”



“Geryan’s army is composed of four to five thousands soldiers...”

Harry and the other riders started to report what they could gather from what they saw.

“... and I would like your scholars to look at it,” finished Harry, pushing the remains of the arrow towards Reald who was sitting at the Queen’s left.

Valera’s brother-in-law picked and started to examine it closely, fingering the carved runes with the tip of his fingers, brows furrowed.

Harry reported his attention to the Queen.

“Whatever it is, we have to find a way to protect the city from this, if not the soldiers.”

Reald glanced up from his study.

“I’ll have everyone looking for something to counter this.”

Suddenly Harry felt a shiver run through him. He saw Valera, Reald, Jihar and Hysten had also felt it.

“Your Majesty, we’ll take our leave, Geryan trespassed our alarm ward,” announced Hysten. Valera nodded.

“Very well, be cautious and may Solyen protect you.”

All those needed on the walls left the room with solemn faces. Harry went to his rooms to take a few more potions: healing and disinfecting draughts, numbing solution, various explosive and blasting brews, soporific powder and potion, a few paralyzing or petrifying venoms and several poisons. He cast a simple charm on his tunic to repair the tear from the arrow, but did not get rid of the blood; he wanted those hypocrites to see that he got hurt fighting for them.

The fact that no healer had come to him was a bitter realization. He had thought they would at least honor their oath, even if they weren’t happy about it.



Sighing, Harry headed for the walls.

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Standing straight, Harry watched as Geryan's army came into view, joining the part that had been sent ahead. Harry turned to look at Hysten.

“They are approaching the first traps, aren’t they?”

“Just a few more meters and they’ll trigger them,” announced the blond elf.

“Good.”

Harry resumed his watching, noticing the dragons crouched on the walls circling Horevald, their rider sitting on their back, ready to take flight at any moment.

Through his bond he could sense Rexeran above him hidden behind an invisibility shield from his own magic, relaying pictures to the young wizard.

Suddenly, explosions were heard and Harry watched with satisfaction as soldiers were blasted away and as thick vines started to spread and catch people in their coils. Harry and Hysten had spent several hours with Earth Elementals to create that plant. Harry liked to think of it as a cross between Devil Snare and nettle with tiny soporific needles.

He watched as the small figures of Geryan's men tried to free their comrades from the vines, only to be caught in them too.

It took them about an hour to manage to get control over them and start getting rid of them. One more hour was needed by Geryan to clear the way for his troops.

Meanwhile Harry and all the others had made rounds of the city checking every entrance, every weak point that might be targeted. Three circles were ready to intervene at any moment. Harry had



checked the wards several times, reinforcing them in a few places that he deemed more prone to being targeted.

He was walking back to the walls when Rexeran relayed images to him. Apparently, Geryan had finally managed to reach their last traps. It had nearly taken him a whole day to cover two hundreds meters of ground and from what Rexeran had showed him and the reports from their watcher, a third of his men were disabled for at least a day if not more.

Harry hurried up the stair leading to the top of the defense wall looking over the plain.

Geryan was more cautious. He was sending scoots to check the grounds before sending the main body of his army.

It would have been a good idea, had Jihar not thought of it and asked Harry to take care of that possibility. The young wizard stopped at the burly elf's side.

"Your spells seem to hold, Athars, his scouts passed without problems."

Harry rolled his eyes.

"I told you they would, now we just have to wait for something heavy enough to cross the trap..." said Harry, watching as the assaults tower were pushed towards Horevald, men surrounding them as well as the catapults. "Come on, come on...."

Harry was watching the towers' progression intently, eyes darting from time to time to the small mark he had placed in the grass.

Only he and those inside the castle's wards could see it as it changed color little by little. The first change was from white to yellow to green, blue then purple. The trap would only be triggered when enough weight would be on it. That would be shown by a red color.

The purple reddened and quickly turned to a ruby red color.



Immediately a deep rumble was heard and the grounds opened under the soldiers' feet. Cries were heard as they fell.

In a matter of seconds, a deep and wide trench had appeared around Horevald. It kept the catapult at the edge of firing range, but not close enough for them to even hit the defense walls, unless Geryan managed to increase their power.

Jihar crossed his arms, a satisfied expression making his way on his face as people cheered around them. The young wizard watched as the six assault towers and two catapults that had been over the trap fell too. The trench was ten-meter deep and six-meter wide, the edge on Horevald's side were made so that nothing exceeding ten kilos could be placed on them. The insides of the trench were slippery and smooth, offering nothing for climbing. Again, it was the work of Earth Elementals. They had built the trench and Harry had set up the trap, aided by a few magis and the Dragons. He had weaved illusions with a magical cover over the hole and had added a weight-related trigger. He had decided to add a cushioning charm for all living being that would fall down in it. Rexeran had been the one to set up that part since that kind of magical manipulation was still out of Harry's reach for now.

They set up the watching rounds for the night with orders to wake them up at the first sign of attack on Geryan's part.

Harry went to his room, calling Teneb as soon as he was back to his rooms.

"Adessa Teneb."

Nothing answered him, besides the slow pulsing of the communication stone.

"Odal"

With a sigh, he slumped on his bed, his arms crossed behind his head, closing his eyes and trying to rest for a few moments.

A loud knocking startled him out of his sleep.  
"Athar!"



Hurriedly straightening himself, he opened the door and looked wonderingly at the herald standing in front of him.

“Yes?”

“You are needed on the walls; Geryan is trying to cross the trench.”

Harry nodded, dismissing the messenger. He quickly strapped on his weapons and called for all the Dragonriders through his mark.

Rexeran was already waiting for him. It was still dark but they could see Geryan’s troops as they used torches to light their way.

Jihar came up to him.

“They are trying to pass. You need to take your men with you to stop that.”

“We will, where are they trying to cross?” asked the young wizard.

“Look at the torches.”

Harry asked him a few more things before walking quickly to Rexeran.

“Ready, Rexeran?”

The Dragon turned his large head toward him.

Do you even have to ask, Astyan?

Harry smiled, caressing the scaly neck, the golden scales shining softly with the torches burning around.

Is there a problem? worry seeped in the Sowaroc’s tone.

The young Athar shook his head.

“No... I just wished we didn’t have to do this...”

We all wish it.



Not saying anything more, Harry climbed on the Dragon's back and merged with him, relishing as he always did in the incredible feeling of rising in the air. However he quickly came back to his senses as they approached Geryan's troops.

Four circles were working, creating magical bridges to allow the army to pass. They had covered nearly three-fourth of the width of the trench.

*Nora, cover us, Sindhar, you take the two on the right, I'll deal with the other.*

Harry swerved on his right and dove straight for the first circle. Arrows were shot their way and Harry had to duck a few of them that came to close for his comfort.

As he passed above the circle, he threw two vials of blasting potion. The riders behind him followed his example. Rising up in the air, he was nearly shaken off of Rexeran's back as the dragon bucked.

"Rexeran!"

Hold on, Astyan, there is a fifth circle attacking us. He bucked again, breathing fire in front of him, incinerating a few arrows.

*Kobalt, take half of the wing with you and deal with the other circle. The other half behind me with your shields up at their maximum strength.*

*Understood.*

Harry and Rexeran barreled on the right and flew toward the circle that was targeting them.

*Joal, scissors.*

Five riders followed him, five remained behind Joal. Harry popped out to reappear opposite to Joal, shielding himself against the curses being sent his way.



Harry led his riders behind him, flying at full speed. The others placed themselves in a column above him. Each of them was above another, slightly behind, forming a diagonal.

As Harry was nearly in front of Joal, he dove just before Joal that crossed above him. The young wizard leant against the neck of his Dragon.

Three, two, one, Fire!>

Rexeran parted his jaws, shooting a large flame, to which Harry joined some of his blue elemental fire. A column of orange and blue flames headed straight to the Elves, Magis and Elemental gathered in a circle, leaving them no choice but to move out of the way.

Joal, through a magical ball as he passed, followed by every rider. Harry watched as the two diagonals crossed above the former circle, incapacitating a few members and thus making sure they would not be able to gather back their circle for several hours at the least, a few days for those that had either been hit by curses some of the riders had sent or hadn't dodge the flames quickly enough. Suddenly, He heard a roar and saw a Dawnris fell, apparently struck at his wings.

*Vanylle! I'll slow her down, you take her back to Horevald.*

A large Quear popped out and appeared under the falling Dawnris while Harry and Rexeran appeared above the Dawnris, seeing Inda clutching her dragon's neck, speaking to her. Delicately, Rexeran opened his claws and took hold of the large reptilian body at the wings' junctions. Meanwhile, Vanylle and her dragon had placed themselves under them and were about to enter in contact with them.

*I got her.*

*Good, Take her back and stay at Horevald. Sindhar, are you done?*

There a slight pause.

*Nearly, we are just setting a few timed Leeches to get rid of what they had already managed to achieve.*



Harry frowned a bit.

*Are they auto-destructive? Geryan must not get his hands on them.*

*They are,* replied Sindhar.

*Excellent then. Go back to the castle once you're done. Kobalt?*

*We're done and leaving.*

*Great job, Nora, no problem?*

*A few wounds, but nothing worrisome.*

*Well, then, let's get out of here.*

Harry rose up in the sky, out of range of Geryan's archers and popped away to Horevald.

That scenario replayed itself several times during the next week or so. Many times, Harry and his riders took to the skies to disrupt Geryan's attempts to pass the trench. By now out of the sixty riders, only thirty were relatively unscathed. Six dragons had had to be sent back to the Headquarters for healing. Fifteen were unable to fight, either because the dragon or the rider had been injured gravely enough for him to require in depth care. The five others had just recovered from their injuries and were still restricted from the more strenuous attacks.

Harry got off Rexeran, sweating and repressed a grimace as pain shot from a wound on his side. He really hoped Reald was starting to get somewhere with those runes. The arrows were already bad enough, but those new projectiles were a real pain. They seemed to have a life of their own and to specially target one of them, following him or her until they hit or were destroyed. Those things were round, circled by a razor-sharp blade. They were launched from small boxes by three people: a Magis, an Elemental and an Elf. Harry had asked three riders to help him catch one of those damned menaces. It had been ornate with the same runes that had adorned the arrow.

Kobalt walked to him, wiping the sweat from his forehead.



“Alright Harry?”

Harry winced, his hand going to his wound.

“I could be better. Any injured?”

“Besides you? Cal will need a day of rest and Kery a week at least if he wants to save his right eye. A few others will need some light healing, but nothing serious, you, on the other hand, need some good care right now.”

He’s right Astyan.

Harry shook his head, tightening his cloak to him.

“It’s nothing, Kobalt, I’ll go see Hysten.”

The young Elemental frowned.

“No, you’re going to go see a real healer, this wound looks really bad.”

“You’re imagining things, Kobalt.”

This seemed to upset the other rider. He wrenched Harry’s cloak away from his body, earning a quickly repressed pained cry.

Blood had started to spread and seep through the blood red tunic, barely visible, but extending quickly.

“Those things don’t do light wounds, you should know that. You’re going to see a healer, now.”

Harry glared at him.

“And who? We’ve been doing this for two weeks, and never did one of them come to me to take care of whatever injuries I might have sustained. I’ll go see Hysten once he and I will have time.”

Kobalt saw red.

“No, you’re not. You’re injured and you’re coming with me.”



Harry had no time to protest the Elemental's decision as he was dragged towards the healing houses. Kobalt barged in there, banging the doors open, not caring in the least of the scandalized looks he was receiving.

"Healer Eas? Healer Eas!"

His shouts echoed in the room.

"Rider, this is highly inappropriate, I-" started a young looking Magis.

Apparently Kobalt had reached his limits.

"No, you listen to me. I've had enough of your hypocrisy. You lot took an oath which bound you to heal everyone in need, didn't you?"

"Well, we-"

"YES OR NO!"

"We did," answered someone from behind them.

Kobalt whirled on his heels, coming face to face with an aged Magis.

The wizened healer stepped in the room, the very picture of indignation.

"What do you think you are doing, rider? This is a healing house, not a dueling arena. If you have no business here, I'll ask you to leave."

This hadn't been the thing to say.

"Good," snapped Kobalt, pushing Harry gently on a bed. "For the past two weeks, all your healers refused to heal Athar Harry, ignoring him and his wounds. So since the only way he could get his wound treated seemed to make him come here, here we are."

Eas pursed his lips.

"I'll ask you to keep your voice down. The Athar doesn't seem to have sustained sequela from his previous injuries that means that my



healers' judgment was accurate and that he wasn't in need of their care."

Kobalt snarled.

"Yes, for sure! That's why Elite Hysten had to do what your men should have done. If not for him, the Athar would be dead by now!"

The old Magis' face was twisted in a grimace.

"Lay him down, then."

Waving his hand, he cast a strong cleaning charm on himself while Kobalt turned to Harry who was now leaning on him more heavily.

"Harry?"

The young wizard grimaced as his second laid him on the bed, jostling his wound. He was getting really dizzy. He bit back a scream as cold hands opened his tunic then probed the deep cut on his flank.

Healer Eas frowned.

"Cera, fetch me clean bandages and cleaning lotions as well as an Urda decoction, quick."

A young elf girl sprinted out of the room.

Eas looked at Kobalt.

"The wound is deep but did not hit any vital organ, on the other hand, he lost a lot of blood, and I'm surprised he's still alive. I assume Elite Hysten was the one to take care of the wounds to his shoulder, head and leg."

Kobalt nodded.

"He was the only one who offered to do it."

Eas signaled to the girl to put her bundle next to Harry.

"He did a good job, bit crude, but good."



"I'll be sure to tell him so," stated Kobalt tersely.

Eas didn't answer as he made Harry drink the decoction, cleaned the wound, applied several lotions on it, a healing spell then dressed it tightly.

"He has to refrain from strenuous activities for the next three hours," announced the old healer, gathering bloodied linens as he washed his hand in a nearby sink.

Harry put his torn tunic back on, thanking Kobalt in a low tone.

"Thank you healer," that said he stood up slowly before walking cautiously out of the room.

Kobalt turned to the Magis.

"You'll talk to your men, or I'll bring this matter to the Queen. You are healers, you are not allowed to decide who can or cannot be healed."

Eas' lips became a thin white line at being chastised by someone far younger than him, but the young Water Elemental didn't leave him time to answer

He knew where he would be able to find the young wizard. He smiled when he found him leaning over map, Hysten was discussing with a few guards while Reald was pouring over several parchments.

"Harry, you're ok?"

"I'm fine, Kobalt. I think Reald found something about those runes."

The Queen's brother-in-law looked up.

"Indeed, I don't have something to protect you while you're fighting, well there might be something but it would be too difficult and impracticable. But," he raised his hand, "we came up with something to protect the city."

Reald took out a map of Horevald.



“We need to create a runic shield to block those runes on the projectiles. To do that, runic focuses will need to be buried around Horevald, at the feet of the outer walls. My peers and I are finishing to engraved the focuses, you’ll have to bury them at the precise spots we marked on this map. Once it will be done, we’ll only need to activate the shield through the main power stone which is already sustaining all the wards.”

Harry turned to Hysten.

“Choose men you know you can trust and who will stay silent. You’ll have to stay invisible during the whole thing, Geryan mustn’t suspect a thing.”

“Very well, Athar, when can we start?” asked the blond elf to Reald.

The scholar gathered his papers.

“As soon as we are done carving all of them. It should ready in two to three days.”

Jihar entered and sat next too Hysten. Harry looked up.

“Any news of Geryan?”

Jihar shrugged.

“He’s dealing with the damage, but I think he won’t try again to cross.”

The young wizard sighed.

“I don’t know whether I should be happy or not about it...”

The burly elf shrugged.

“For now, if he’s going to leave us alone for some time, I’m all for it...”

The rest of the day was spent training or meeting with intendants. Harry decided to skip this part to meet his Dragon on top of a tower. He knew Rexeran liked to sun-bathe there.

What has you so troubled, Astyan?



Harry sat down, leaning against the reptilian body.

"I'm worried about Teneb, it's been days since I last had news from him."

Heldren is fine. There have been some wounded, but nothing too serious. They have already gotten a third of the focuses. Your dwarf friend gave Teneb some help, but can't do a lot without his leader's approval.

"I just wish he was here... It would be so much easier..."

Rexeran turned his draconian head towards him.

You are doing great, Astyan. Your brother will be soon by your side as he should always have been.

Harry offered a tired smile to his bonded.

“Thanks, Rexteran.”

Both wizard and Sowaroc remained silent for an hour, enjoying the calm and the sun. Harry relaxed, making the most of the peace he was feeling. He could hear the dull metallic clangs of the blacksmiths' hammers at work, the neighs of the horses, and the dimmed echoes of the people working in the yard.

As the sun set and Harry was about to fall asleep, he heard panicked shouts and yells as well as a whistle growing louder and louder.

# JUMP

Without thinking, Harry got up and jumped over the edge of the tower, eyes widening as he realized he wasn't going to escape a painful meeting with the grounds.

O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O

The young wizard closed his eyes, praying for a miracle. He tried to think of spells when suddenly he had the urged to smack himself. Focusing, he urged his magic to work. One second later a raven



opened his wings to slow his fall. Harry managed to lift himself enough to avoid a painful collision with the ground. Heart beating wildly, he was never thankful enough for Arxeren urging to practice his transformations as swift as possible. For his raven and snow leopard forms he had managed to go under the second, his phoenix one took him thirty seconds to complete. With horrified eyes he watched as enflamed balls flew over his head, hitting the buildings. Harry ran towards a crumbling building. Calling on his Elemental powers, he willed the flames dead. He was faced with a large stone, the size of a small car, apparently covered with a liquid that stuck to the stone. Sniffing, he snarled.

“Oil”

Raising his hand to his mark, he focused on the riders.

*To all the valid riders. Emergency. Horevald is attacked, I want all the riders, in particular those able to extinguish flames and fighting. Be cautious but spare no efforts.*

Harry ran towards Hysten’s barracks.

“Hysten!”

The blond elf was shouting at his men, sending them around.

“Athar! Shouldn’t you be up in the air?”

Harry refrained from raging.

“I will, but you must start to bury the focuses.”

Hysten raked his hand through his hair.

“Sir Reald is still working on them.”

“Then have him hurry! We need them as soon as possible. The riders are going to do their best, but there are only so much we can do. We’ will need to rest at one time or another... Have all the fire and water Elementals up the walls and trying to get the fires out. See if there is anything the Earth Elementals can do about the stones...”



Hysten sighed.

“Alright, we’ll do our best.”

Harry nodded.

“As we will.”

With that, Harry went to a small shadowed corner and transformed into his raven form, flying back up to the top of the tower where Rexeran was waiting for him, wings opened, eyes blazing.

Harry jumped in his back. He was among those that often rode without any equipment to tie himself on his dragon. He was pushing more and more riders in his group not to rely on those means, but it took some training to keep your balance while flying on a dragon.

*Nora, have all the riders that have Elemental’s powers useful against those blasted projectiles ready, but only instaure a shift. Sindhar have your second take half of your men and have them cover Nora. You and Kobalt will come with me to try to get rid of the catapults. Kobalt, you take half of the wing.*

All wings’ leaders sent their agreement as Harry shot in the air while Rexeran let out a loud roar. Dragons sprang up quickly, filling the sky with reptilian bodies, the riders reduced to small brown dots, or a red one in Harry’s case.

Harry watched people running to stop the fires under him as Rexeran started to fly towards Geryan’s settlement, the riders in his group positioning themselves behind him.

Two hours later, he came back, missing ten riders that had to leave after getting more or less severely injured. Five catapults out of the fifteen Geryan had been using were destroyed beyond repair; two more had been heavily damaged. They also gotten rid of two assault towers and three launching boxes for the new weapons Harry had named bludgers. The young wizard found the name particularly accurate.



Nora and the riders on shift kept trying to destroy the enflamed projectiles, but some still managed to pass and destroy parts of the city. From his view point on the palace, Harry noticed that most of the fires were being controlled or dieing. Harry waved his hand and the small cuts he had sustained closed themselves only leaving thin white and barely discernable lines.

Kobalt walked to him, as well as Nora and Sindhar, all four of them wiping the sweat and soot from their faces.

They had been talking for a few seconds when a cry made them look up.

With horror-filled eyes, Harry saw a projectile fly straight for the healing houses. Without thinking he conjured a huge magic ball and threw it at the stone. He watched with dread as it hit it straight on, and sighed as the projectile exploded upon impact.

Kobalt turned to him.

“Did you know they could be destroyed with Magic?”

Harry shook his head.

“I had no idea; we’ll have to get the Magis to help.”

*Joal, can you organize all the Magis powerful enough to destroy those things.*

Hearing the rider’s agreement, he turned to Rexeran.

I will see if we can help young Nora.

The Sowaroc roared, echoed by many others as he took the air again.

Harry discussed for a few more minutes before hurrying to the castle, having to report to the Queen.

He found her in the council room, looking outside.

“Majesty?”



She turned to him, her face grim.

“We need to put a stop to this quickly, Athar. Was there any casualty?”

Harry sighed.

“Three deaths and ten were critically injured. Fifty others suffered more or less serious wounds.”

“For now.”

Harry nodded, not trying to deny that fact. As long as this attack would continue, the casualty numbers would increase.

Approaching, he joined the Queen in her contemplation of the yard, where people were running around, trying to help fight the flames, pull people to safety, strengthen buildings...

Five minutes later, The Queen wrenched her eyes away from the window and walked slowly to the large table.

Harry followed her and sat at his usual seat.

“Reald needs to finish this runic protection as fast as possible. We won’t be able to keep them away for long.”

Valera took her head in her hands and Harry realized how much this conflict was taking out of the Royal.

“Are you alright, your Majesty?”

Valera glanced at him.

“I just wish I could be sure I’m doing the right thing, Athar, and that this fight would end quickly.”

Harry fell silent.

“I cannot answer that, your Majesty and as for the end of this battle, the answer is not in our hands.”



They stayed silent for a few more minutes before being joined by Jihar, Hysten and several counselors. Everyone started to make their reports, Hysten giving the others the names and the time of the shifts for the teams helping the dragons and Nora's riders with the projectiles.

An hour later, they left each back to their rooms.

Entering his suite, Harry, got rid of his Athar tunic, covered with sweat, dirt, soot, torn in many places and stained with some blood. Putting on some light nightclothes, he went to the bathroom. Before going to bed, he went through several reports, tried to contact Teneb once more without success and looked at his contact stone, hoping to have an answer from Hermione.

His eyes widened as he saw a stack of paper under it. Taking them, he started to read over them.

*Harry*

*I hope you are well. Voldemort has been really quiet for now, there were only a handful of raids, most of them being scare tactics. A few more archives were attacked too and there were a few more kidnappings.*

*Vampires are staying at the school and more of them are watching the school. The student's population doubled and most of our classes are war oriented. We are kept busy with them, plus our additional training as member of the Junior Order.*

*I looked Morgan Le Fay descent.*

*Out of the sixteen families, five are said to be dead or completely Muggle now; and four more are rumored to have died too. I tried to find information on them. I think one of them must be, but the three others most likely hid their ancestry by changing their names and leaving Britain. Being an heir of Morgan was never approved of by the large public.*

*Now for the seven others, you find quite a lot of the oldest Families:*



*The Zabini, the Herlington, the De Moligny in France, the Vallez in Spain, the Mc Kerayn, the O'Cairn and the Santercelli in Italy are all descending directly from the Sorceress.*

*I joined the name of the other nine families.*

*I hope to receive news from you soon.*

*Hermione*

Harry immediately took his stone.

“Adessa Hermione”

Nobody answered him, so he waited a minute before leaving a message.

“Thanks a lot, Hermione. You’re the best. Make sure to give your results to Dumbledore and tell him to hand it to Ancient Adrien. He knows what it means. Speak of it to as few people as possible.”

Harry paused.

“The war started.... I-I really miss you, guys, take care and call me if you need me.”

He sighed, whispering a quiet “Odal”.

He slumped on his bed, limbs feeling like lead. His sleep was restless as nightmares kept waking him. At dawn, he got up, dressed, took a small bite before going out and joining the riders finishing their breakfast.

He discussed with Nora, Sindhar, their seconds and Kobalt, instauring the shifts for the day.

They wouldn’t send a team to destroy the catapults today, the Dragonriders would concentrate on protecting the city. However a group would make a try the next day, to allow some riders to recover from the past day’s confrontation.



Harry approached Rexeran, leaning against his bonded for a few seconds, drawing strength from the Sowaroc.

Things will turn out fine, Astyan.

"They can't get really worse..." sighed the young wizard before climbing on the golden, scaly back..

The day seemed to stretch indefinitely and Harry welcomed with relief the dusk since that meant that the Elementals and Magis in the castle would take their place for the night. This had been agreed the day before. The riders would protect the castle during the day and teams on the grounds would take care of the night shifts.

The next four days followed the same model, the last one being used to bury the focuses.

As the dawn of the fifth day of Geryan's assault with the catapults, Reald called them.

Harry looked around and saw Valera, Hysten, Jihar, one Magis Elder and four Elementals, one of each type. Reald turned to them and showed them to the room of the main power stone.

"All the focuses are placed around the city. I just need to link all of them to each other and to the power stone. You were called to be part of the process and insure that every kind of magic would enter in its composition."

All of them nodded in understanding.

"Very little will be required of you. The hardest part was the carving and burying of the focuses, now we only need to feed the energy needed to activate the protection. All of you will cut yourself and draw this rune," he explained while unrolling a parchment, showing it to them, "You will need to draw them on the altar around the stone."

The whole process went by quickly and they watched as Reald started to speak quickly in a guttural tongue, waving his hand, seemingly weaving thin air together. There was a small flash and



Harry felt a shift in the wards as they accommodated this new addition.

“Done,” announced the scholar. “As long as the focuses will stay in place, the shield will hold.”

Valera sighed with relief.

“Thanks the gods for that, Reald. Give my congratulations to your peers.”

“What are we going to do then, your majesty?” asked Jihar.

“We’ll wait. We have a water supply, enough food to last us a year at least. We’ll manage.”

There was such finality in her tone that no one tried to argue her decision, even if Harry could see quite a few of them didn't agree or appreciate it. Well... the siege of Horevald had started.

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Harry crossed the day on a calendar. Teneb had left on October, the second and Geryan had attacked Horevald on the tenth. The siege had started on the twenty-first of October and it had already been a week. The population in Horevald was getting restless and Jihar's men had had to diffuse several brawls that had broken out. Everyone's nerves were stretched thin and Harry would be grateful when this situation would end one way or another.

Walking to his cupboard, he looked for an Athar outfit that was not damaged. Dressing, he checked on the bandage on his right side, result of a brawl the past day. The dragons watched the walls and flew over Geryan's settlement every day. The man had spread his men all around the town, to prevent people from leaving the city.

Harry left the room, locking it behind him with several strong locking charms.



He stopped at the kitchen to grab a few things to eat on his way to the council room. Valera had taken to gather all her closed advisors every morning.

However he was stopped by a herald on his way.

It was the same one he had met the day the King had been destroyed.

“Athar? The Queen asks for your presence immediately at the doors.”

Harry raised an eyebrow as he followed the elf through the corridors.

“Do you know why?”

The Herald smiled faintly.

“Geryan sent an ambassador.”

Curiosity raised its head in Harry’s and as he quickened his steps.

People were massed at the doors and the herald and Harry had a hard time making their way through the crowd to reach Valera’s side.

An elf, a Magis and an Elemental were standing in front of the Queen. Harry recognized them as part of Geryan’s escort when he had declared war to Horevald. The elf was carrying a pole from which hung a white flag that flapped gently with the slight breeze. Valera smiled at him as he took place next to Hysten and Jihar.

The free newcomers turned to the Queen.

“Now that the human is here, we’ll convey the High-Duke’s message,” started the elf.

“High-Duke Geryan does not wish this conflict to last months, if not years, he does not want our world to be paralyzed by it. He is then offering you a deal.” The Magis that had resumed the elf’s speech turned to Harry.

“Since the human is in the heart of this... disagreement over our attitude towards humanity, High Duke Geryan challenges the Athar to a Sword-duel. Should The High-Duke win this fight, he would have



proved that humans are too weak to even think of an alliance with our world and the Queen will step down from her responsibilities, leaving the throne to her son with several trusty people named as counselors for the first years of reign of the young Prince. Should the Athar win, the High-Duke will recognize his error and agree to the Queen's decision with the insurance that his family and he will not suffer from his mistake and that no charge will be held against him."

Silence followed his words, broken by hushed whispers and no subtle glances towards Harry who kept a blank face, staring unblinkingly at the man, trying to find any loopholes in this deal.

Valera turned to all her advisors, silently requesting their counsel.

One by one they nodded or shook their head, Jihar and Hysten agreeing to the deal, both of them confident in the knowledge that the Athar could win this duel. Finally Valera looked at Harry.

"Well, Athar, Most of my advisors agree to this deal, however the decision rests with you."

Harry held her eyes, his decisions already made in his mind.

He turned his eyes towards the three ambassadors.

"I agree to this challenge."

The Elemental smirked.

"Very well, Athar," the title was spoken with such sarcasm that nobody could deem it a show of respect. "The High-Duke will await you half-way from the trench. You will be allowed two witnesses to make sure no trickery will take place. The only weapons allowed will be the swords, no others will be allowed. No magic will be allowed, even if wielded through the blade. The duel will end by the complete incapacitation or the abandon. This won't be a duel to Death."

Harry nodded his agreement to those conditions.

"The Duel will take place tomorrow at half-past noon."



That said, the three envoys turned on their leaves and walked back to the horses they had rode to the castle and galloped away.

Valera turned to Harry

“Go prepare yourself for that Duel. Jihar, Hysten, go with him and help him. You can request others to help get him ready. All the others, go back to your posts, this agreement implies in no way a truce.”

Hysten and Jihar followed Harry to the practice room and locked the door, not wanting gawkers to come bother them today.

Hysten conjured three chairs and sat down.

“I don’t know what you know of Geryan’s skills when it comes to Sword-fighting.”

Harry sat down gracefully.

“Very little. I came across his name a few times and know he is an expert in this field.”

Hysten nodded.

“He is a legend when it comes to swords. He won all the tournaments for the ten past years. He traveled a lot in his younger years and learnt a lot from various master, creating his own personal style that proved to be deadly effective.”

He waved his hand and figures appeared.

“I saw him during one of the tournament. He likes to toy with his adversaries and tire them by moving them around in the arena. He favors quick attacks, tricky steps, heavy and powerful strikes.”

He waved his hand again and the figures started to move. Harry watched intensively as the two figures battled. Geryan was not to be underestimated.

“What kind of blade does he use?”

Jihar crossed his arms over his chest.



“The rumors say his sword was made by dwarves in the time when our people still lived together and has been passed down his line since then. Given what I saw of it, I would agree to that. It is a long double-edge sword that he can handle with one hand but prefer to use it with two hands since it gave him more power behind his hit.”

The three of them watched the fight between the little figures.

He had to admit Geryan was no amateur and that he would need to use all he had learnt to beat him.

Jihar stood up.

“I never really saw you fight with a sword,” he said, unsheathing his own sword. With a wave of his hand he cast a blunt charm on the blade. “Now, I want you to give me your all.”

Harry raised an eyebrow but imitated him. Both of them saluted and started to circle the other. For the rest of the day, Hysten and Jihar relayed the other to teach the younger man what he would need to be able to resist Geryan. In the end, they both attacked him at the same time to push him to his last limits. Harry had managed to disarm Hysten, but was pushed back by Jihar, forced into defense by the general, which allowed Hysten to pick up his sword and resume the assault. In the end, Harry was backed in a corner, in a desperate move, He struck, managing to knock out Jihar but opened his guard long enough to allow Hysten to strike him and he felt his sword escape him and fly out of his grip.

The three of them were panting and sweating.

“You are good, Athar, perhaps good enough to beat Geryan. But no matter what you do, never lower your guard in the slightest or underestimate him. He beat great champions and is still undefeated to this day...,” announced Jihar, sheathing back his sword.

“Mind your right side and be careful with that changing hand trick of yours. If you can do it, do, but be careful, it could be an occasion for him to disarm you...” Hysten conjured a towel and dabbed his face. “Now, I just have to wish you luck.”



The Blond Elf smiled at Harry.

“Though luck will have nothing to do with your duel tomorrow.”

The two Elves saluted him and left the room while Harry started stretching. Had his guardian been around he would have had choice words for the two other fighters that had forgotten that step. However, he wasn't about to risk the outcome of tomorrow duel because of laziness...

He walked back to his room, stopping at the kitchen to eat a light dinner. He decided to take a mild sleeping potion to make sure he would sleep soundly and wake up refreshed and ready for the fight. He carefully dosed the potion to make sure he would wake up around nine in the morning.

The night was not long enough for Harry and he woke up slowly, groaning as the sun rays hit his face. The three hours up to the start of the Duel were spent getting ready. After a solid breakfast, he went to warm up lightly, changing to clothes that wouldn't impede his movements while fighting twenty minutes before the time of the challenge. Checking one last time his clothes, belt, boots and gloves, he left his room, locking it behind him. The corridors were deserted, something that was a first. Usually, there was always a herald running, maids cleaning rooms, servants walking around, guards doing their rounds around the castle.

He walked out and discovered where all the castle inhabitants had gone. All of them were massed on the walls, eager to watch the duel that would decide the end of this war.

Harry walked to the stables. He found Erin carefully petting Shadow. The stallion was nudging him playfully all the while. Harry smiled upon looking at them.

“You like him, don't you?”

Erin jumped, startled.

“Athar, I-I.., Yes, I like him...”



Harry approached and was pleased with the shining coat and trimmed tail and mane.

“You take good care of him...”

The young elf blushed under the praise.

“He is ready for you Athar,” he muttered.

“Thank you, Erin.”

Harry unlocked the stable’s door and took the reins of his horse in hand and dragged him out. Checking the length of his stirrups, he then climbed on Shadow’s back, caressing the muscled neck, laughing as the stallion raised his head, preening under the attention.

“You peacock...”

Adjusting his reins, he moved his legs slightly, indicating his horse to make a U-turn. Shadow complied good-naturedly and trotted out of the stables. He guided him out of the city and stopped at the door, seeing Jihar and Hysten on their own mounts and waiting for him.

Hysten lightly kicked his light bay gelding that couldn’t stay in place. Jihar’s was a solid and calm grey stallion that looked vaguely interested by the antics of his younger companion.

“Athar, May the Nine give you strength,” said Demenor, bowing his head as Harry passed next to him.

Nodding in thanks, the young wizard pushed Shadow forwards, saluting the Queen, Djaryle, Doryan who was standing next to his wife and his daughter who waved happily at Harry, something that soothed the resentment he had against the races here.

Talking a little, Harry watched as the doors were opened and the three of them took their leave from the Queen. Harry tightened his legs around his mount’s flanks, urging Shadow forwards. The stallion started cantering, Harry keeping him in check. He knew the horse loved galloping at full speed, but he wanted to wait Jihar and Hysten,



knowing that their mounts would not be able to keep up with the black stallion at full speed.

Finally, they reached the dueling arena Geryan had set up: A large ring paved with stone and surrounded by a small edge also made of stone. Four power stones were placed at the four cardinal points and would allow both sides to erect the shields that would prevent them from interfering with the duel.

Harry climbed off Shadow and tied his reins to prevent him from putting his leg in them. He knew the horse wouldn't wander too far and would come back as soon as he whistled.

He walked into the arena and examined it closely, looking for anything out of the ordinary. Sounds of hooves approaching made them look up.

Geryan and two people were approaching and stopped abruptly, jumping off their horses.

Harry heard Jihar snort at the blatant display.

Geryan was dressed in his house colors: Green and beige, the green cloak with fur on the hem and collar, tied to his shoulder that billowed behind him as he strode towards the dueling ring. His two companions followed him, a few steps behind, discrete. His leather boots, whose soles seemed to be reinforced with metal, rang on the stones as he made his way towards Harry. With flourish, he untied his cloak and threw it to one of the men who had accompanied him.

Calmly, he unclasped the Athar crested clasp that tied his own blood red cloak trimmed with crimson. Folding it, he handed it to Hysten.

They both entered the center of the ring, unsheathing their swords that shone in the sun. Pointing it on their right side, they raised it up in front of them, tilting their upper-body stiffly. Meanwhile the four attendants had each walked to a power stone and raised their parts of the shields around the arena. Straightening, they turned on their heels and took a few steps away, falling into a fighting stance as they started to face the other, eying his guard, searching for weaknesses. Not taking their eyes off their opponent, they started to circle the



other, but soon, Harry noticed that Geryan was slowly trying to place him face to the sun. A faint smile at this cheap tactic, he took two steps forwards, feinting right, as his opponent raised his guard, feinting left before spinning on himself and striking, holding his sword with both hands. Geryan quickly brought his own blade up, blocking Harry's sword easily and pushing against him. For a few seconds, both fighters pushed against the other, evaluating their rival. They both stepped back, resuming their circling.

Harry was aware of all the eyes that were fixed on them and pondered on the consequences of his possible loss of this fight. This small second of inattention cost him as he noticed too late Geryan's attack. The High-Duke managed, to score a small cut on his left side, too small to really bother the Athar in his movements.

Harry however did not leave him time to enjoy this small advantage, as he pushed forwards, enchainning feints and strikes to push Geryan back.

At the moment the elf felt his knees touched the edge, he lost his concentration long enough for Harry to score a small cut on his cheek, before striking with the handle of his blade, hitting Geryan in the left shoulder, drawing a grunt from the elf that replied immediately in kind, striking at Harry who fell on his feet and rolled away.

None of them were speaking, breathing deeply, the only sounds being the clash of their swords and the sounds of their boots on the stone.

Suddenly Geryan rushed forwards, spinning and raising a leg, hitting Harry on his side, his metallic sole and heel knocking the breath out of him as he felt on his rib crack a little. Showing no outward sign of pain, besides a small wince, he ducked the blade aimed at his legs by doing a cartwheel over Geryan head, extending his leg while landing, hitting Geryan straight in the back, sending him to the floor as he rolled back to his feet upon landing from his jump. However, the elf had quickly recovered and seemed quite angered at getting hit by a mere human.

He unleashed a real fury of slashes and strikes at the Athar, forcing him into defense, making him focus only parry the blows, leaving no



rooms for attacks. Harry was forced to hold on the handle with both hands to resist to the strength behind each blow. Having enough and annoyed at having been cut again on the forearm and the thigh, this time a bit more deeply as he saw the blood starting to seep through the fabric, Harry locked his feet and blocked a vertical slash, flicking his wrist he managed to twirl their swords, unbalancing his opponent, with a quick turn, he changed his sword of hand and slashed at Geryan's side, cutting through the clothes and slicing the flesh, wrenching a small cry from the elf, who immediately stepped back, a hand going to his flank, looking at the blood tainting his skin.

Blinking, he looked at Harry who was by now panting a little. Harry decided to push his advantage and resumed his attacks that were expertly blocked by the High-Duke that did not seem that bothered by his wound.

For the following minutes, they continued assaulting the other, sometimes managing to score and injure or hit their opponent with the pommel of their sword.

They had resumed observing their opponent from afar, stretching a little.

Suddenly, Harry's head shot towards the sky as he felt the scale around his neck heat. He raised his hand, showing his request for a time-out. Geryan looked at him frowning. Harry scrutinized the clouds, eyes widening as a golden form appeared in the air, diving at full speed.

Rexeran seemed extremely unsettled as his eyes were quickly changing colors.

"Rexeran? What is happening?"

Geryan had walked up to him.

"Athar, no outside influence is allowed. Your dragon has nothing to do here..."

Astyan, the Isles are sinking... The riders there just sent the message. Heavy earth quakes are shaking the grounds and the sea is rising



higher and higher... the mind voice of the Dragon echoed in the air around them as he did not use the personal link between rider and bonded.

A cold hand seemed to grab Harry at his throat and squeeze.

“Rexeran, are you sure?”

The Sowaroc looked at him with red eyes, and pictures flooding Harry’s mind: Pictures of houses crumbling, people wounded and running around, trying to protect their families, running away from the monstrous waves that rose higher and higher on the shore, even reaching the outskirts of the villages closest to the sea.

Harry immediately sheathed his sword, turning to Jihar and Hysten which were already talking into contact stones.

“Hysten, get the shield down.”

He walked towards the edge but was stopped by a hand on his shoulder.

Geryan’s voice broke the tense atmosphere.

“Are you forfeiting, Athar?”

Harry turned towards the man with unbelieving eyes.

“What are you talking about, didn’t you hear Rexeran, Lyn, Keis and Jiya are sinking, High Duchess Cerelia is asking for help and you are asking about this bloody duel? That is the most important thing to you, this duel!”

“Don’t try to avoid the question, Athar. I don’t believe the Isles are sinking. This is just a way for you to get out of this fight, because you know you will lose.”

Harry’s eyes hardened.



“So, in addition of calling me a liar, you think of me as a coward. You don’t care at all for the lives of those living on the Isles. As long as you get to rule, you don’t care what happened to them!”

Geryan snarled at those words.

“This is my people you are talking about human! Do not insult me! But the isles can’t sink!”

Harry looked at him with rage-filled eyes.

“And why not! You pumped the isles dry of their power that allowed them to remain stable enough.”

“And this power is still stored in the power stones that I used.”

“You used those power stones in your attack: to create those illusions in Ynris, to create that Veil that his preventing Athar Teneb to come, to hide your army under an invisibility cover, to try to cross the trench that the Queen’s soldiers, Magis and Elementals created!”

Geryan reddened.

“There was always enough power left in those stones that the isles can’t sink. Look at those stones; they are still holding the shields around the ring!”

Harry’s eyes widened.

“You mean those four stones are the ones where you stored the power from the islands!” His face paled. “How can you be so stupid? I am the Athar; the shields needed to block me from seeking help would have to be extremely powerful!”

Harry took a few steps towards the man.

“You are the cause of this catastrophe! Now you are going to give us a hand, to prevent all the people on those islands to die!”

Geryan raised his sword.



“They are no more dieing than we are! Stop trying to weasel your way out of this duel!”

Harry’s eyes narrowed.

He placed his hand on the pommel of his sword and raised the other. With a wave of it; he created a breach in the shields and summoned a contact stone, throwing it at Geryan.

“Contact the High Duchess. If she tells that the islands are not in any danger, I will resume our fighting.”

Geryan raised an eyebrow but activated the stones, calling for Cerelia. Suddenly a female voice was heard above cries and a deep rumble.

“Who is calling? Answer, whoever you are!”

Geryan frowned.

“Cerelia?”

“Geryan! What did you do, you bastard!” she screamed. “Our Islands are crumbling apart, the sea is rising! What did you do! Do you want to kill us all?” Her voice broke, as a hysterical edge filled it.

“Ce-Cerelia, I...”

He closed the communication, looking at the stone with wide disbelieving eyes, as if he couldn’t really believe what he had heard.

Harry walked to him.

“Now, you believe me, High-Duke!” he said, snarling.

Geryan blinked at him, apparently shocked by what was happening. Meanwhile, Jihar and Hysten had taken down their parts of the shield, closely followed by Geryan’s companion, as to preserve the remains of power still in the four stones.

“Listen to me, High Duke; I want you to free Athar Teneb, the wings and the Queen’s army that are prisoners on Ynris. Then, I want you to help us evacuate the Isles!”



Geryan took a step back and shook his head.

"No, should the rest of the wing and army come back, I have no hope of winning this war. I won't jeopardize my world..."

"But you are ready to condemn part of it!" cut Harry, exasperated.

"I-I," Geryan clearly didn't know what to do.

Harry took a deep breath.

"Listen carefully, I am going to start the evacuation of the Isles along with the wings already here as well as the soldiers and the Xhan and Xhana's servants. If you want to finish this duel once everything is finished, I will fight you again with the same prices for the winner. But I won't resume this duel while people are dying when I can help them!"

He turned and left the ring, running to his stallion.

Rexeran, please, go to the Headquarters and explain the situation, have them send messengers to the temples in Meyan and around Arthania. Gather all the volunteers and supplies. Meet me at Horevald in fifteen minutes. Be quick and careful.>

The Sowaroc bowed his head, sending a feeling of pride and devotion to his bonded.

I will Astyan. Be careful...

Harry on Shadow's back, the horse having come back as soon as he had whistled. Jihar and Hysten had already left and Harry could see them making their way back to the castle.

Letting the reins loose, he leant forwards and pressed his mount's flanks. Immediately, the stallion shot forwards. Harry blinked, trying to protect his eyes from the wind. Soon he had caught up with the two elves but did not slow down his mount. Reaching the doors of the castle, he leaned backwards, raising his hands up a little. In two or three strides, the stallion had stopped. Caressing him, he jumped down, hearing Hysten and Jihar arrive. Erin ran to him taking the



reins of Shadow and leading him back to the stables. Harry walked to the Queen.

“You heard?”

She nodded, pale.

“Yes, I already asked the scholars to either find a way to anchor a portal to the Isles or to a nearby place.”

Harry shook his head.

“It won’t work, the whole area is completely power-dry or about to. There is no way you’ll be able to anchor a portal there... Is there anyway you can transport large groups of people from place to place?”

Valera shook her head.

“Not really... We have always leaned a lot on portals.”

Harry pursed his lips.

“I’ll send the wings, gather your healers and their supplies, we’ll take them to the islands, and we’ll bring back those most in need, I... Ask Reald if he looked up Portkeys during his stay at my school. Knowing his curiosity, he wouldn’t have been able to resist learning new things...”

Valera nodded, a bit puzzled.

“I will do so, and if he didn’t?”

“Then, I will need to make a trip to my world to fetch them or someone able to do so.”

Harry looked to the skies and saw that most riders were already ready to fly away.

“I will leave now, your Majesty, have your healers and their supplies packed in the yard and we’ll transport them to the Isles. Set up a contact with the High-Duchess to learn of their more pressing needs.”



The Queen shot him a tight smile.

"It is being done as we speak."

"I will organize the wings and come back to take them."

He rushed towards the stairs, climbing them three by three. He ran to Kobalt and the other wings leaders with their seconds.

"I assume you heard of what is happening."

They all nodded somberly.

"I hope Geryan will allow the Athar and the rest of the army to come back or we won't be able to do much," said Sindhar, racking a hand through his hair.

"Me too, but until then, we'll have to do with what we can. Sindhar, take your wing and go to the islands, try to secure an area for the healers to settle. Send a group on each island; have them do the same thing and look at the magical nodes to see if we can stabilize them or not. Call us so we now where to land. Nora and I will follow as soon as the healers are ready."

Harry looked around.

"Now, if you are ready, let's go. Sindhar, have all your riders take at least one soldier with them, more if possible," he paused and looked around. Spotting Jihar, he cast a sonorus charm.

"General Jihar, have the men ready to leave go to the plain, the wings will arrive to take them to the Isles."

That said, he nodded to Sindhar, motioning to him to leave.

He watched as the twenty riders still valid in Sindhar's wing tied their helmet on their head and jumped on their dragons' back. Their bonded had been waiting on the walls and towers for the signal. One by one the dragons flew to the plain where soldiers and their bags were waiting. Harry watched as an average of three soldiers climbed



behind the dragon rider, with the four of five odd ones in case of particular huge dragons, mostly Quears and a few Azureans.

Hysten gestured to him to climb down. Harry pushed through the crowd massed on the wall and hurried downstairs.

“The healers are ready. A healer plus some supplies will leave with each rider. I will remain here and organize the city as well as keep watch on Geryan... I don't trust him.”

Harry shot him a tight smile.

“Me neither...”

That said he touched his mark.

*Riders, be ready, you will go to the yard two by two, take one healer and as much supplies as you can.*

Immediately, an Azurean and a Dawnris dove in the yard and landed carefully. Immediately, the riders fixed two large bags on their dragons and gave a hand to the healer, to help him up. Thirty seconds later, they were springing in the air, crossing the two others dragons that dove to take their place.

A tingle in his mark warned him of a message.

*Athar, we readied an area outside the High-Duchess castle, about five hundred meters away from the outer wall.* A picture made his way into Harry's mind.

*I got it, thank you, how is the situation?*

*Hectic.*

Transmitting the picture of the landing area to all the riders, Harry walked to the healers, looking for their leader to know how many travels would be needed. He noticed the aged Healer that had treated him awhile ago. He approached him, steeling himself.

“Healer Eas.”



The Magis turned on his heel.

“What! Oh... Athar...”

Harry refrained from rolling his eyes.

“How many men are you sending to the Isles? A wing is gathering the healers in Arthania and Meyan.”

Eas sighed.

“Good... I have fifty healers and thirty apprentices that need to be sent as well as all those supplies to set up several Healing houses.”

“Very well, have an apprentice go with every healer.” He touched his mark, contacting all the riders.

*Attention please, for those who can, take an apprentice with you. Stay at the Isles and evacuate the areas that are the more at risks. Favor those injured if they can be moved, go by teams of two with at least a healer or an apprentice with you. See with Sindhar where you need to go first.*

Harry surveyed the departure of all the riders, giving a hand here and there. He went to his room to get a few things he thought he would need: his contact stone, the torque he had been given during the ceremony after his bonding, several vials of Potions, all his brewing supplies as well as some stone focuses in case they would be needed and some change of clothes.

When he came back to the yard, he saw that nearly all the healers were gone. Kobalt and three other dragons were readying themselves as Rexeran flew down, landing next to him.

Harry walked to Eas as the Magis gave orders to people Harry assumed were his subordinates.

“Healer Eas, are you leaving too?”

The Magis was startled and turned to him.



“I will as soon as you can give me a mean to, Athar.”

Harry nodded, taking no heed of the snappy tone in which the answer had been delivered.

“You will ride with me then.” Harry turned to Kobalt. “Kobalt, I want you to start a count of the people missing, those injured, those dead. Ask as many people to help you as you want, but we need to know who we are looking for. It will also ease the search for the families.”

The Elemental nodded and leaned on his Dragon, using their link as they left the grounds thanks to the push from the Dragon hind-legs.

Rexeran had approached the Chief Healer and the heap of supplies he was expected to carry.

Harry waved his hand, watching as the bags gathered and fixed themselves to the Sowaroc’s back. He easily climbed on Rexeran and extended his hand to Eas that gingerly took it. He pulled him up and settled him behind him. Checking on the bags, he activated his bond with the Sowaroc, shivering as their magic mixed and twined together.

Let’s go, Rexeran...>

With a great push and helping himself with flaps of his large wings, the Sowaroc took off, rising in the sky. Once they were high enough, Harry concentrated on the picture Sindhar had sent him, conveying it to Rexeran. He felt Eas grip his waist nervously as they disappeared, reappearing a few heartbeats later above the area Sindhar had indicated.

Rexeran started a quick downward spiral and landed smoothly.

Great landing, Rexeran...> Harry was still relishing in the feeling of flying as he jumped off the great Sowaroc, helping Eas to slide down as well as untying the supplies the Magis had asked to take.

He levitated the bags and cases and walked to the four huge tents that had been erected around which people were running, and from which sobbing and pained cries were coming.



He spotted Kobalt and Joal talking to several people, giving them several sheets of paper and walked to them.

Carefully putting the bags and boxes down, he nodded to Eas that immediately started issuing orders.

Looking at Kobalt and Joal he motioned to them to follow him.

Rummaging in his pocket for the bag of focuses he had shrunk before leaving, he finally got his hand on them and enlarged the bag.

"We need to stabilize this area." As he said that, he could feel tremors running through the grounds under his feet. "Those tents will be useless if an earthquake has them crumbling down." He focused his attention on Joal. "I know little of focuses, but I think a triad between us three would be enough to do the trick."

Joal frowned, deep in thought.

"Let me have a look at your focuses."

Wordlessly, Harry handed him the bag, letting him examine the various stones he and Teneb had gathered while at the Headquarters on their guardians' urging.

After a few minutes of tensed silence, Joal had picked four stones: four pure and big topazes.

"They will do, but I will ask you to let me do the linkage between them. Kobalt, no offense, but I would prefer to have an Earth-Elemental in your place. However if you could act as a monitor, I would be grateful. I think Janelle would be a good choice."

Harry nodded, knowing the older rider knew more about this than him and contacted the female Elemental.

*Janelle?*

*Athar?* The mental tone showed some surprise.

*What are you doing?*



There was a small pause the rider answered.

*I'm helping evacuate Antha, a village close to the sea and that is being flooded as I speak.*

Harry looked around and spotted two riders who were finishing erecting a new tent, the long deep blue braid of one of them being a dead give-away as to her identity.

*I'm sending Anira and Kery to help. I need you to come to the landing area to help us stabilize the area where the Healing houses are being set up.*

A new pause followed his explanations.

*Very well, Athar, I'm coming.*

Feeling a little relieved, Harry warned Joal and Kobalt before walking to Anira and Kery, discussing quietly with them as they finished their work, securing the last poles holding the tent. The two riders agreed right away and hurried to their own dragons, rising in the air and disappearing from Harry's eyes as a Quear popped in the sky, diving quickly and landed a bit roughly in his precipitation.

Janelle, a tall female with shoulder-length light green hair made her way to Kobalt, her helmet under her arm, a few cuts marring her face.

The young Elemental wiped the sweat from her face, looking expectantly.

"I trust the Athar explained the situation," said Kobalt, "Joal will be in charge for the linkage. I will monitor the whole process; you and the Athar will be the other two focuses. We hope a triad will be enough."

Janelle nodded.

"Tabor and I will do our best."

Harry had then come back and Joal started to probe the magical currents under the tents, trying to find the best way to stabilize them. Finally, he motioned to them to follow. He walked towards the east, a



few meters away from the tents, waving his hand; he conjured a small wooden pole and planted it in the grounds.

“Athar, if you could secure the focus on this pole.”

Harry crouched next to it, examining it. Taking the biggest topaz, he placed it on the top of the pole, concentrating the magic on the top and delicately weaved a small net to definitively fix the stone and not have the magic interfere with the linkage needed to stabilize the area.

He got up to his feet and nodded to Joal. The Magis conjure two other poles and walked away towards the northern-western part. Stopping a few times to feel the magical current he finally planted the second pole, waiting for Harry to secure the stone, before striding away towards the south. Hesitating several times, he took a longer time before finally securing the third and last pole.

Once the topaz was solidly fixed on the pole, Joal looked at them.

“Janelle, stay here, Athar, took the eastern position. Kobalt, walk to the center with this stone that you will bury deep into the ground,” he handed him the last stone, “and monitor our progress, contact the Athar at the first sign of instability.”

Kobalt nodded.

“Very well.”

They each took their place and waited for Joal to start.

Slowly the Magis drew a strand of the disturbed magical current towards his stone and delicately soothed it. He then sent it towards Janelle to definitively anchor it with her Element. Janelle offered him her power, not trying to take matter in her own hands. Then, he directed towards Harry a bit more easily since Janelle had secured the strand within the focuses. Harry just stood, allowing the power to flow through him and his focus, adding his own to strengthen it. The strand came back to Joal and Harry noticed that Kobalt had been tampering with it all the time, soothing it by little touch of his own power when it had become a bit too unstable.



Joal gathered the strand of power and drew more of the magical currents flowing under the area they wanted to secure, sending it into the first link he had created between the three outer stones and carefully sent it towards the center stone, all the while draining more and more of the currents in the stones. With light touches and seamstress-like expertise, he linked all the stones together, each of them connected to all the others. Finally fifteen minutes after they started, Joal withdrew, now satisfied with the way the currents were canalized under the area.

They spent the next hour, securing similar areas on the two other islands, using different focuses every time. That done, they joined their wing and aided with the evacuation and securing of the villages around.

Harry took two riders, Baran and Inda and flew to the mountain area, the High Duchess having received a plea for help from a town situated in a valley. The road out of the valley had been blocked by an avalanche and the village had also suffered from it, several houses having been buried under rocks and mud. Many were injured and the only way to help them was to fly to them.

Three healers and seven soldiers were accompanying them as well as some necessities that were needed.

As they reappeared above the city, Harry felt his contact stone burn through his tunic. Taking it in hand he activated it and listened.

"Athar, Reald had copied the process for the creations of portkeys, thinking the concept interesting, he and his scholars are currently creating as many of them as possible. We have no news of my son and Teneb and Cerelias is sending reports every hour. What is the most important in your mind?"

Harry thought quickly.

"We need to evacuate all the areas at risks: those close to the sea or mountains, or on unstable grounds. We need circles to stabilize large areas to house the refugees and build shelters for them until we can either prevent the islands from sinking more than they are or we can evacuate them to Meyan, Arthania or Ynris."



The Queen sighed.

“Very well, I’ll take that into account. Be careful Athar and May the Nine guide you.”

She closed the contact and Harry focused back on the mission at hand. The town was devastated. The earthquake had destroyed a third of the town, very few houses had managed to resist the strength of the first shock. Harry’s face hardened as he took in the destruction under his eyes. Spotting a place that must have been the center place of the town, Harry motioned the riders to follow him. They landed smoothly and jumped off the dragons quickly.

Rexeran, can you and your companions check the whole area for people or anomalies? Afterwards your help will be greatly appreciated to clean the rubbles away.>

We will be glad to help, Astyan.

Harry leaned against the dragon’s neck, scratching the scale above the eye, chuckling as the Sowaroc growled gently.

Thank you, Rexeran.>

The Dragon didn’t answer and with a roar took to the shies again, the Dawnris and the Wiscand that had accompanied him behind him.

Harry looked at Inda and Baran.

“Have a look around, Inda; please try to register all the people living here so we know who to look for. Supervise the healers; I heard you had a particular strong healing gift so help all you can. Baran, I want to organize the search for more people missing as well as organize all the inhabitants. We need to gather all the supplies that can still be used: food, water, furniture, everything you can find.”

The Air-Elemental nodded tightly.

Harry turned to the soldier.



“I want three of you, those with the stronger gift in healing to help rider Inda, the four others will second rider Baran.”

The young Athar then looked at the healers.

“I will help you set up your tent and try to secure it as much as possible until we can evacuate all of them.”

The three healers nodded stiffly and spread. One of them began to clean an area, unpacking a few bags. Immediately, Harry started to help. Once a few stretchers had been made and a small tent planted, Harry probed the magic under them.

He sighed, relieved to notice that the currents were much tamer than those next to the castle. Gently, he soothed them, powering them a little to stabilize them.

That done and once he was sure the healers were correctly installed; he made his way to Inda.

“Inda, what are the casualties for now?”

The young elf looked down on her sheet of paper, face somber.

“Ten dead, many injured and sixty missing for now among them fifteen children, but I’m still counting.”

“Alright, continue to do so, if you find healers send them to the tent, the healers are ready to receive people, have one of them fetched if you feel some people can’t be moved.”

That said Harry hurried towards Baran.

All around him, ruins and rubbles, people crying for help and others obviously in shock trying to give a hand to clear the rocks and rubbles to access to what remained of their home.

He stopped next to the Air Elemental as he was levitating large rocks out of the way. Shouts erupted, as three bodies came to view. Harry had to look away for a few seconds upon seeing the dislocated and mangled corpses. One of them had been a child... Blood was



splattered all around as they had been caught under their crumbling house. Two soldiers walked to get them out of the ruins, pushing rocks out of the way to disengage the bodies from the stones. Gritting his teeth, Harry walked to help them. Gently, he cleared his way to the smallest corpse, and gently pulled it to him. Taking him, for it had been a boy; he carried it to cleared grounds, conjuring white linen on which he placed his charge, trying not to jostle the body too much. Blinking away tears of helpless rage, he went back to help, hearing the cries of a woman...

They worked till dusk and late in the night at the light provided by the fires Harry had created. Twelve more bodies were discovered as more and more people helped. Several small shakes scared the survivors to death, but Harry made sure to place Magical nets on the areas the more at risk to prevent building from falling down and killing more people. Ten injured were found much to the joy of their families. Seeing them being embraced by their loved ones made Harry all the more determined to find all those missing. The clearing process was accelerated as the three dragons came back and started to help.

Using his magical senses, Harry walked among the rubbles, trying to sense a living being prisoners between the stones.

He had been walking for a few minutes when he got a sign of life, a feeble one, heavily fluctuating. Calling for help, he quickly started to clear the rocks away... He could feel the signal decrease as they worked their way to those buried under the stones, wooden slates, tree trunks, torn clothes...

He felt one of the signals stop, tears welled behind his eyes as he doubled his effort, urging the others to hurry. A second signal died. Finally, they got to a first body, an aged Magis, then a woman, probably his wife, digging feverishly they were still two signals flickering feebly.

Pushing rocks aside, he finally saw a piece of a green dress, small flowers embroidered on the hem. He felt one signal fade as he increased his effort, pushing against a huge rock, intent on freeing whoever were stuck under it, on saving them. A tear fell down his cheek as he felt one of the two signals disappear.



A golden head pushed the rock away.

Harry immediately knelt, next to a woman sprawled over the stones, hair in disarray, blood pooling under her body. She was a Magis. Harry turned her over, shaking her lightly, trying to get her to answer him. A weak cry was heard from under her arm.

A small baby was tightly tucked next to her, his face covered with dirt, blood.

Taking him gently in his arm, Harry could see he was barely breathing, choking on his breath. He was cold, so cold that Harry wrapped him in his cloak after untying it. Gently, he started to feed him his magic, knowing Magis relied a lot on their magic to support their body's functions.

"Healer, get me a Healer!"

The baby's face was pale like all the members of his race, white hair, and orange eyes. However, under the dirt, he could see the skin changing to blue. The baby was crying weakly, hiccupping and choking strongly, Harry's heart clenched in his chest as he saw blood seep through the baby's mouth.

"Where is that healer?"

Extending his senses to feel the baby's Aura, he found fading away. Feeding him more and more magic, he tried to ease his breath, he tried the minor healing spells he knew and could perform but he could do nothing as he felt him stop breathing, his small heart quickly following.

He couldn't repress a sob as he realized the baby was dead.

He felt the warmth coming from Rexeran, as the Elder tried to offer him comfort, sensing his distress. At that moment, he heard hurried steps making his way towards him. Standing, he turned to the healer. Tears were falling down his cheeks, as he handed the frail body to the Healer.

His voice was slightly broken as he handed the corpse to the Elf.



“You’re too late... He’s dead.”

He said nothing more and strode away. He walked for a few minutes, his head filled with the picture of the baby's face as he died under his eyes. He slid down a wall, shivering.

A huge body, slightly gleaming in the light of the torches settled next to him.

You couldn't have done more, Astyan...

Harry took his head in his hands.

“He was so small, Rexeran... so small... and he died... he just stopped breathing in my arms... I-I...” He shook his head, trying to dispel the picture filling his mind.

Astyan, he stayed under the stones for several hours, it was already a miracle that he lived that long...

“His mother protected him, if I had been... maybe he-he...”

You tried Astyan; you did all you could have done. Rexteran placed his head next to Harry, nudging him gently. His head was bigger than Harry's chest, forcing him to be extremely careful when dealing with humans.

Harry leaned against the dragon's head, seeking comfort. He did not speak, just wanting the reassurance that he had done all that he could.

He stayed there for a few hours, trying to forget all he had seen during the day and steel himself for what would be coming.

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## Chapter 31

Harry was shaken awake and blinked in the first rays of dawn.

Looking up, he saw Kobalt bending over him.

“Are you alright, Harry?”

Harry knew he must be quite the sight, tear tracks on his face, mud and dirt staining his skin and clothes. He slowly stood up, leaning on Rexeran. He stayed silent for a few seconds, before turning to Kobalt, sighing.

“I will be. I just need to try to take my mind of what happened.”

Kobalt offered him a tight smile.

“It will be alright, now come on, we need your help.”

Harry straightened himself, casting a few cleaning charms on himself and then followed his second across the village. The morning was spent helping with the cleaning. Kobalt told him they had found ten more bodies and six survivors. Sixteen people were still missing, five of them being children, much to Harry's distress. People were still looking for them, but he could see that their hope of finding them alive was quickly fading, most of resigning themselves to the worst. After an hour, he heard a small hissing and came upon a snake protesting heavily and quite vocally against the two-legs that had nothing better to do that bother respectable reptiles during their nap.

Had the situation been different, Harry would have found it funny, but the snake gave him an idea. After a twenty minute long talk and bargain, he managed to get the snake's cooperation as well as his agreement to rally other snakes to the task at hand.

Harry had Kobalt, Inda and Baran spread the word and soon about thirty snakes were seen slithering amongst the ruins, hissing loudly from time to time, signalling a corpse or a survivor. Thanks to their help, all but three people had been found whether dead or alive by noon.



The snake Harry had made the deal with slithered to him.

*Thossse you ssstill sssseek are not there. Maybe they went to the foresst. Many two-legsssss go in there. They like to pick fffruitssss and herbsssss... Not even good onessss and they ssscure our preyssss with their nassssty sssscnt...*

Harry nodded to him.

*The two-legsssss need to fffeed thossse living in their nesssst. Thank you fffor the help, ssssnake.*

The snake slithered up his body.

*We made a deal, two-leg sssspeaker. Our help do not come fffor fffree.*

Harry nodded

*I will keep my part, ssssnake. Should the issless be lossst, I will come fffetch you and thosssssssse who helped me today. Otherwisse you will receive the herbsss you assked and will be relocated to the placce off your choicce.*

The snake suddenly lunged and bit him in his shoulder, before Harry could do anything. He immediately withdrew, venom dripping from his fangs.

*That will insssssssure you fffffulfffill you part of the deal. I do not trussssssst two-legsssss. They lie like they breathe.... SSShould you back down, you will die in painffful ssseizuresss*

Harry winced a little upon moving his shoulder. That had hurt!

*What kind off ssssnake are you? And iff the isslesss are sssaved how will thissss not kill me?*

The snake slithered down.



*My kind isssss of little interessst to you, wizzzard. And my venom isssss tied to the oath you take. Ifff you break it, you will wish you never hatched!*

Harry smiled a little at the threatening reptile. Cunning and conniving, Salazar Slytherin had been right in choosing the snake as his house's mascot.

Rexeran appeared in the sky and Harry could nearly felt the excitement coming from the usually restrained Elder. Harry stood up, frowning, hoping that a new catastrophe hadn't occurred. Many others followed his example. The Sowaroc landed with a cloud of dust. The sun had been present for the whole day and had dried the grounds.

"Rexeran?" asked Harry, hurrying at his bonded's side, "Did something happen?"

The Sowaroc sent him the draconian equivalent of a triumphant smile and answered clearly for all to hear.

The Army and the Wings came back! There was no hiding the exultation in his tone. The people started to cheer and Harry's shoulders sagged with relief. Teneb was back!

A smile broke his face as he ran to his Dragon, embracing him.

Heldren will be soon by your side, like he always was, said Rexeran, using their link.

As he said that, Harry felt new people arriving and looked up. Indeed a silver reptilian form had appeared in the skies and was quickly diving.

"Gae...", whispered Harry.

The Emnag landed next to Rexeran, Teneb jumping off from her back. He quickly walked to Harry and took him in a tight brotherly hug.

"It's so good to see you, Harry, how are you holding up?"



“Good to see you too, Teneb, you have no idea how much I wished you had been here.”

Teneb pulled away, his two hands on the smaller wizard's shoulders.

“You’ll have to tell me everything that happened, brother...” his worried eyes did not leave the young man's face.

Harry nodded.

“I will. Did Geryan lower the shield?”

“He did,” answered Teneb, his tone a bit bitter. “Not that it would have mattered, we had found the last focus and were about to dig it out when the veil went down.”

“How are Mena and his wing?”

“They are being taken care of as we speak, but the healers at the temples did a great job, only Laorna might suffer sequelae.”

Harry sighed.

“I assume the Queen told you what happened.”

Teneb’s face darkened. It was then Harry realized how tired his friend looked. He had lost weight and a bandage covered the left side of his neck.

“Yes, Valera told me of what happened. Reald’s apprentices are finishing the things you called portkeys. The Army should arrive in an hour or so. Geryan is also helping. The Xhan told me the temples would also lend some help. My father and Demenor are organizing the arrival of the troops: it’s useless to make too many people come.”

Harry started to walk to the healers’ tent.

“Geryan can’t give back the power he took from the nodes supporting the Islands.”

Teneb shook his head.



“No, he is currently trying to find a way to fill those nodes again or at least fill them enough to stabilize the isles and allow the power reserves to get their levels back to normality.”

Harry sighed.

“Alright, then, we’ll evacuate the women, elders and children... All those we can. We need to place as many people as we can to safety.”

Teneb agreed quickly to that and soon started to propose shifts for the different wings as they walked to the tent. They talked quietly with Nora and Sindhar that had come back, having learned of Teneb’s return.

It was decided that Nora would leave three riders in town. Three wings would go to Keis, three others to Lyn and the five remaining ones would be spread over Jiya.

That said, they contacted Valera and planned the arrival and spread of the soldiers over the three Isles as well as the intendancy and the supplies needed. Harry welcomed all this activity that allowed him to forget what he had to see while clearing the ruins of the town, the faces of those people he couldn’t save... Once they had come to an agreement with Valera, they waited for the soldiers to come, by group of thirty. Celen was among them and dragged Harry and Teneb towards Cerelias castle, barely taking time to salute them. Harry told Kobalt to take charge and assign parts of the isles to the different groups. He told them that Reald might have found something to save the islands but said no more.

Harry looked around taking in the state of the castle. All in all the building had resisted to the earthquakes and the shakes that had followed. Most of the walls had cracks running up or down and the majority of the paintings and cases had fallen down. Very few windows had resisted and Harry thanked the skies that the weather seemed to hold up. Celen led them down several corridors before entering a large room where many people were already debating heatedly.

Seeing him, a small Water-Elemental female stood up.



“My Prince, Athars...” Her face was gaunt shadowed by heavy circles under her eyes. A bandage dressed what looked like a deep cut in the back of her head.

“Sit down, High-Duchess; this is not the time for pleasantries.”

Cerelias complied easily, smiling grimly.

Celen looked around.

“So, what is the situation?”

Cerelias looked at a pile of papers.

“The islands have started sinking a day ago. The sea is already three meters higher. Many villages were partially if not completely flooded. The Earthquake destroyed many towns or villages. Several of them can only be reached by air and have not received any help for now.”

Celen bowed his head.

“Soldiers will be sent with at least a healer to every village as well as a Deiser and Doija, either by portkeys in the area is magically stable enough or with the help of the Wings.” He paused, gathering his thoughts.

“We will evacuate the children, the women and those at risk: the wounded, elders... The Dragons will be required to organize that part. Portkey travels are too rough for the weaker.”

The People around nodded, their faces sombre. An old Magis slowly stood up, leaning heavily on the table.

“My Prince, are we going to abandon our lands. Couldn’t Geryan just give back the power he stole?”

Teneb sighed.

“I fear it will be impossible, Sir Venda. From what our Queen told me and the Prince, Geryan used most of the power he had taken and this is why the isles started to sink.”



Celen nodded.

"The Athar is right." He was cut before he could say more.

"This means our Islands are condemned to disappear! There must be a way to prevent this! With all the knowledge and power your scholars pride themselves of; you must know a way to prevent this disaster!" Sir Verda looked on the verge of having a stroke.

Celen looked at Teneb who nodded tiredly.

"There might be a way. Prince Reald, Head of the Queen's scholars came up with a way that could replenish the nodes underneath your Isles..."

"Then what are you waiting for!" shouted an elf dressed in deep blue velvet clothes. The man was highly agitated.

Celen shot him a cold look.

"Because that solution implies a few people that will risk their lives and or sanity to carry this plan to success."

"Head scholar Reald thinks that the power of Darkana that was last called upon to create the veil surrounding our land will be able to take care of the nodes. This process will however require channels that will convey the power from the Well of Darkana to the depleted power reserves."

Celen raised his hand to stall any words from the people in the room.

"To access to Darkana's powers, the channels will need to have a close link with it and the Dragons, which means that the Athars are the only ones able to do this."

All the eyes turned to Teneb and Harry.

"Should the Athars agree to try to follow this plan, Athar Harry would channel power to Jiya's nodes, Athar Teneb to Keis. Since Lyn is much smaller than the two others, the Xhan and Xhana volunteered



to use the power stored in their temples to replenish the nodes and act as conduits to this power.”

Celen looked at Harry.

“Athar Teneb already knows the risks involved but Athar Harry doesn’t.”

The Prince faced Harry, his eyes not leaving Harry’s.

“The possibility that the power might be too much for your body to handle is high. Even your link with Darkana might not spare you heavy magical burns, pain and backlash. You might be seriously injured, sent into a magical coma, stripped of your magic, rendered insane or even killed.”

Harry didn’t really pay attention as Celen kept on enumerating the risks that might be involved. Reaching for his bond with Rexeran he conveyed to him what had been said, asking for his opinion. After all, the Elder would be the best to answer him. A minute later, as Celen had finished his explanations and was looking expectantly at him, he received his bonded’s answer: warmth, pride and acceptance.

Steeling himself he returned the Prince’s stare.

“What was Teneb’s decision?”

Teneb smiled sadly at him.

“I agreed.” There no more to say. Harry gathered his thoughts, trying to decide if he had forgotten something.

“Then, I will do it too, on one condition,” he quickly added. He locked his eyes on Celen’s face. “I want your oath and promise, my Prince, that, should my friend from my world call for help while I can’t answer them, help will be sent.”

Celen frowned.

“I can’t really answer for others...”



Harry raised his hand.

“I will ask for volunteers among the wings and give you their names. Should my friends call, you will have to send them to my world. I want your word on that.”

Celen nodded tersely, ignoring the look of outrage and shock of some of the people gathered in the room.

“Agreed, you have my word, Athar. I, Celen Soryan Ikerstorm-Vyriannight swear to Athar Harry James Potter that help will be sent to his world should his friends or family call for it and he was unable to answer their call.” A small glow around the Prince showed the oath had been sealed.

Harry tilted his head, smiling a little to show his thanks. Celen smiled back before gathering the papers in front of him.

“Good, Athars, you need to go to the Headquarters, Demenor as well as Xhan Luan and Xhana Cya will be waiting for you. We will keep on evacuating as many people as we can while they will try to stabilize the lands. Athar Harry, do not forget to give the names of those volunteering.”

Harry nodded and stood up like all in the room. Teneb immediately walked to him.

“Let’s go, Harry. We have much to talk about.” He squeezed his friend’s shoulder. Nodding to Celen, Teneb took Harry’s arms and guided him out of the room and through several corridors. Finally, he stopped in front of a door and placed his hand over the door.

A small clicked echoes and the door opened. Harry sent him a puzzled glance before stepping in the room.

“This is Celen’s room. We came here to spend some time here when we were younger and I was keyed in his wards,” explained the elf, walking to a chair and slumping in it.

Harry spotted a couch and let himself fall in it with a big sigh.



“How are you really, Harry, truthfully?”

Harry’s lips thinned.

“I don’t really want to talk about it, Teneb. This is not the most pressing issue at hand.”

Teneb eyed him.

“I think it is indeed a pressing issue. You will need to have your mind at peace if you want to survive what we are going to attempt.”

Harry crossed his arms.

“I did what I needed to do; Rexeran helped me get over what I witnessed. I don’t need any more people to psychanalyse me.”

Teneb raised his hands, amused.

“Alright!”

Harry shook his head.

“Sorry, Teneb, but the past days have been difficult...”

“So I heard...” The elf shifted in his chair.

“And you Teneb? What happened to you?”

The elf sighed.

“Well, before I called you we had been trying to find Geryan’s army and had been raided several times. That was Geryan’s men technique: harassment, raids at all hours of the day and night. After we found the truth, all the healers of the group were busy with stabilizing Mena and his wing. I started to spread my men with Magis to help localize the stones.”

Teneb paused a little, a faraway look in his eyes.

“We had found four of them when a dwarf came to me on Terio’s order. He just handed me a map and seemed surprised when I



thanked him. The map had the position of nearly all the stones, except for one. We then started to dig and had to gather two circles every time to get to the stones and destroy them. Geryan's circles had been quite creative."

"I can imagine..."

"And moreover his men kept raiding our troops. But all in all, I think you had it worse than me."

Harry shrugged.

"We did what we had to."  
Teneb got up and opened a drawer, taking two glasses and a bottle and brought them with him. Pouring one glass, he handed it to his friend.

"What is it?" Harry looked at the liquid in his glass.

"Liquor made with the bark of a tree growing in Arthania. It's popular around here. Celen gave me some for my fifteenth birthday."

Harry took a tentative sip and nearly choked on it, earning a laugh from Teneb.

"Laugh all you want, that stuff is strong."

Teneb raised his glass.

"Or it's you that aren't used to drink, being the nice little boy you are. I'm sure you never drank before." Teneb was smiling at him.

"I did!"

Teneb took another sip.

"Oh right, how did you call that? Butterbeer?"

Harry scowled.

"I did drink!"



“What? Spiked milk?”

Harry didn't deign answer that remark and took a new tentative sip. This time, he savoured the flavour under the heavy alcoholic taste. It wasn't that bad. By the time they drank their third glass, he didn't know if that stuff tasted good or if his tongue had gone numb, but whatever it was he found himself considerably more cheerful as he downed his glass, filling it again immediately under the amused eyes of Teneb who was on his fifth glass already...

He wouldn't remember a lot of what they talked about during that night, besides small snippets...

He was however cursing himself and his stupidity the next morning.

He woke up slowly, eyes blurry as he tried to remember how exactly he had landed on the floor, in his underwear if he might add. Blinking, he sat up immediately regretting ever thinking of moving as painful jolts shot through his temples.

Moaning he pressed his hands to his head, wishing for something, anything to end this.

A large cup of a murky, foul smelling liquid was pushed in his hands.

“Good morning sleepy-head! I thought you wouldn't wake up?” said Teneb in a cheerful voice, sauntering to a chair.

Harry could only gape at his friend, his mind reeling at the whole injustice of this. The elf had drunk at least twice the amount of alcohol he had been able to... or at least he thought so... HE should be the one sprawled on the floor, unable to make a coherent thought!

“How come...” Harry couldn't finish, it hurt too much to think right now...

“How come I'm not sharing your lovely condition?” finished Teneb, a smirk making his way on his face. “I'm an elf, my dear hangover friend. What I had yesterday was barely enough to get me slightly joyful... Drink that, it's guarantied to cure even the worst hangover.”



Harry winced, wishing Teneb would speak lower and cursing his idiotic Gryffindor pride that had asked he tried to out-drink the elf...

Eyeing the cup distastefully, he gulped it in one go as he did for his Potions back then in the Hospital wing. He had had more than enough practice downing the Potion Master's foul concoctions. Personally he thought it was to discourage the students from injuring themselves...

He nearly gagged as the liquid made his way down his throat but thought differently as the throbbing pain in his head all but disappeared.

"Thank you."

Teneb just shook his head.

"Think nothing of it. I couldn't very well allow you to leave this room in the state you were..."

Harry snorted.

"And because of whom? By the way what brought this desire to see me dead-drunk?"

The young elf smiled, watching as Harry simply cast several cleaning charms over himself and his clothes, making himself look every bit the powerful Athar.

"Well, you couldn't attempt what could be a potentially lethal mission without getting smashed once."

Harry looked at him, an eyebrow raised, disbelief clear on his features. The young wizard however chose not to pursue as he realized it was already quite late in the morning. He followed Teneb out, his friend filling him on what had happened while he was sleeping his alcohol off.

Apparently Teneb had gathered all the wing leaders and their seconds, explaining to them what was going to happen today as well as give them their tasks for the day. He told them of Harry's request



and asked them to pass the word among their wings and gather the names of those volunteering to go to the human world should the need arise.

Both Athars exited the castle making their way to the castle yards, saluting those they met on their way out. They climbed on their dragons, Harry a bit peeved at the amusement he could feel from the Sowaroc. The Elder seemed to think Harry's morning predicament highly humorous. They quickly travelled to where their wings were currently assigned. Both of them had chosen to lead their riders to Lyn.

Being the smallest Isle, it was currently the one the most at risk at the moment and needed to be evacuated first. They worked till noon: helping with the clearing of ruined building, the evacuation of whole families. Teneb went to work with the healers for a while, his and his dragon's power being quite useful to the overworked healers on site. At noon, they called the different wing leaders back to the High-Duchess castle to meet with Celen.

The Elf Prince was involved in what looked like a heated talk with several counsellors as they stepped in. Harry was inwardly amused at the relieved look that showed in Celen's eyes as they entered. He quickly ended the talk, excusing himself under the pretence of having to receive the Athars.

Once the contact stone had been deactivated, he sighed with relief, gesturing to the eleven Wing leaders to sit down.

"Thanks Solyen for small mercies. That elf is being a real pain... What can I do for you, Teneb, Harry?"

Harry shot him a smile at being addressed by his name as Teneb answered, taking a paper, Moral, an Air-Elemental with a perpetual curious look etched on his face handed him.

"We will be leaving the Isles once we are done here. In our absence we ask Joal and Fenrin to act in our place."



Teneb looked down at the paper, eyes widening slightly as he took in the names written on it. He sharply looked to the leaders, passing it to Harry who didn't manage to hide his surprise.

"Is that true?" asked the elf, his voice showing his disbelief.

Nora rolled her eyes, smiling good-naturedly.

"Have a little bit more faith in us, Teneb. The dragons have been quite insisting and the riders seemed to have listened for once. The Athar's attitude," she looked at Harry, "helped also..."

"So, more than half of the wings are volunteering to go if needed?..." Harry whispered looking around at the various Wing leaders. Most of them nodded, except for a few of whom Harry could only hope for indifference at best.

"Thank you, thank your riders. I will leave Kobalt and Opheria judges of how many need to be sent if my world call for help."

Harry stood up, bowing slightly to all those gathered and exited the room.

Teneb smiled to his peers and Celen.

"Thank you all, May Solyen and Lunai protect you."

The riders stood and bowed back.

Teneb left, hurrying to catch up with Harry, finding him in the yard, next to Rexeran, the both of them apparently deep in discussion.

Harry looked up as he approached them.

"Ready, brother?" he asked extending his arm.

"Always, brother," simply answered Teneb, clasping his forearm with Harry's.

"Ilan ory sianter," started the young wizard.



“Ilan ory saroll,” continued Teneb. Both of them picked up the last two verses.

“Desen hela athia, Lith tarx jomi!”

Sharing a look they parted and climbed on their respective dragon, rising up in the air and disappearing to the eyes of those watching.

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They reappeared above Darkana and Harry was once more filled with awe upon seeing the building that was heralded as the center of the Dragons’ powers.

Rexeran and Gae spiralled down to land in front of the building. The sun was hitting the towers that shot toward the skies, spires of glass, marble, obsidian and crystal like material. Harry leaned against Rexeran.

I will be with you, Astyan. You and Heldren are going to channel a power rarely called upon. All the dragons will support you through this trial. I must urge you to be cautious... You know how the Spirit plane was tainted, you will have to be in a deep trance for this to work, I must ask you to protect yourself. This taint now fully permeate the first plane and is trying its best to seep to the Soul plane...

Harry nodded.

“I will be and you will too, won’t you?”

The Elder shot him a worried look.

I am not the one most at risk, Astyan. I urge you to be careful.

Harry nodded, scratching the thin scales at the juncture between the head and the neck.

With a last scratch, Harry walked away, heading for Darkana’s doors, Teneb at his side. They stopped at the heavy doors, looking once again at the figures carved in the ebony and oak composing them. Together, they pushed them and stepped in, eyes riveted to the altar



at the end of the aisle. Demenor, Doryan, Ysela and Delia as well as Djaryle and Valera were present.

Little Delia ran to her brother who took her in his arms, embracing her tightly, laughing. The little elf-girl was dressed nicely in a pink dress, ribbons tying neatly her hair in a braid.

Teneb put her down, walking to his parents to embrace them.

Harry watched the scene, happy for his friend, even if he wished his friends could be here. An insistent tugging on his sleeve had him look down.

Delia raised her arms, a pout on her face.

Laughing and shaking his head, Harry took her in his arms; he tensed as she pecked him on the cheek then put her down. Giving the little girl his hand, he walked to her parents, bowing to them.

Doryan smiled at him as well as Ysela.

“Hello, Athar.”

Harry returned their greeting, also saluting Demenor, Djaryle and Valera.

Harry shot Teneb a glance. He knew that what they were going to attempt was dangerous, if not to say lethal. He had not expected spectators.

Djaryle seemed to read his thoughts.

“We will not be staying, Harry. We just wanted to wish you luck before you start the process.”

Harry’s eyes widened, a bit surprised by this gesture, a fact not missed by the young Elf.

“Don’t be so surprised, Harry. Not everyone is as opposed to human as you think.”

The young human smiled.



“Perhaps not, Djaryle.”

That said he took her hand, kissing it lightly and walked to the altar. A Deiser and a Doija were standing behind it, dressed in ceremonial clothes that looked quite uncomfortable, their faces covered by masks: a gold one for the male and a silver one for the female. Holes surrounded by tiny crystals had pierced for the eyes and another one for the mouth.

As one, they bowed sharply before straightening up and opening their arms. Harry took a deep breath and looked at Teneb who was bearing a similar expression where determination disputed its place to worry and fear. Steeling his resolve he closed the few meters that had been separating him from the Altar. In a smooth move, he fell to one knee, head bowed.

He felt two hands on his head and something, a power of some sort pass through him, leaving him with the sensation of having been cleaned from the inside; his own power resonating with whatever energy had touched him.

“Rise, Athar.”

Harry obeyed, unnerved by this voice that sounded disincarnate, neither male, nor female, it just was.

Teneb was still kneeling and could hear the footsteps of the others fading away as Harry stood up. He kept his head bowed, waiting for his turn.

Harry stood up and let himself be pulled towards the altar and stopped when facing the head of the Sowaroc carved on one side of the altar. Slowly, the Doija took his hand while the Deiser plunged a small crystal cup in the large metallic one that had been used during the ceremony before the bonding with Rexeran. At the same time, the Doija had cut his thumb quite deep. Harry barely winced and watched as blood started to pool and glide along his hand. She placed his hand above the Deiser cup, letting his blood mix with the nacre-like coloured liquid. Bubbling appeared as soon as the two touched and the liquid started to swirl. Indicating to Harry to press the cut to stop the bleeding, she then walked to Teneb and reiterated her actions.



Once that was done, Harry and Teneb were led through a hidden door and down a flight of stairs to a circular room with an exact replica of the altar standing in its centre. The walls were made of a shimmering crystal-like material that seemed to pulse in time with Harry's heartbeat. The Doija and the Deiser walked to the altar and mumbled a few words neither Harry nor Teneb could decipher. Without a sound, a creak appeared in the top of the altar, widening to allow the biggest crystal Harry had ever seen to appear. The gem was half a meter wide and had been finely cut and polished, sparkling under their eyes. The Doija approached Harry as the Deiser did the same for Teneb opened his tunic and shirt, exposing his chest. Taking his thumb, she probed the cut to reopen it and allow the blood to flow then started to speak, her strange disincarnate voice echoing in the empty building, perfectly synchronized with the Deiser's.

"May the Nine hear our words on this day as we call on their powers."

She turned her face towards Harry.

"This child of the Dragons has proven himself worthy, the strength of Altai flow through his veins," She traced the rune for Altaï on his left wrist with his bloody thumb.

"Aurine's honesty and Des' wisdom shaped his mind," The rune for Aurine was drawn on his throat and Des' on his right temple.

"The courage of Phaïst and the Seid's patience have shown on his actions," Harry watched fascinated as the Doija placed the rune for Phaïst over the right side of his chest, Seid's was already adorning his chin.

"Cehra can attest of his tolerance and Dia of his knowledge." Two more runes were placed on his body: Cehra's on his right wrist after the Doija pricked his left thumb, Dia on his left temple.

"His heart has always followed Gae's teachings," a new rune was drawn over his heart.

"And his soul has always been true to Rexeran." She finished writing the last rune, eyeing her work before stepping back.



Harry then noticed that two other priests had brought the two smaller crystal cups from upstairs. The Doija took one and walked to him, her robes swishing with her movements as her male counterpart imitated her.

“Drink it completely.”

Her tone left no place for argument.

Eyeing the liquid with distrust and not extremely keen on drinking his own blood, Harry hesitated for a second before taking the cup and downing it.

He blinked, feeling little changes.

Looking at the Doija, he raised an eyebrow. He couldn't really know what the priestess was thinking because of her mask, but her eyes betrayed a certain amusement.

“Know, Athar, approached the altar and place yourself in front of your bonded.”

Harry complied, feeling a little sluggish as he did so.

“I want you to reach the deepest trance state you can and connect to the magical flows under the Isles. Your mind is opening as you fall in the deepest trance possible.”

As she whispered her instruction, she placed herself behind him, taking both his hands in hers and placing them above the crystal that was the heart of Darkana.

Both she and her colleague had been chosen for this task because of their experience and their skills in Magical perception and manipulation. Both of them were Magis and had studied thoroughly the magical flows and the different ways to manipulate the currents to their needs. She pushed her magical sensitivity to its limits as she followed the young Athar's effort to connect with the disturbed and erratic flows under the Isles.



She was worried for both of them. To fall into a trance this deep was extremely dangerous in particular since they couldn't anchor them. Add to that the power they were going to channel, they would be lucky to be alive by the end of the process if they didn't die upon connecting with Darkana's power.

Suddenly she felt it and focused on her task.

Looking up, she crossed the gaze of Lyrom. He tilted his head indicating he was ready.

Taking a deep breath she recalled the old incantation. As one the two priests spoke it, loud and clear, the words echoing in the crypt as they lowered the hands of the Athar so that their palms touched the crystal.

"Darkana oaltie thea dendan'yr daryanth'iot una iotri mardanie!"  
(Darkana hear the call of your children and answer it!)

They stepped back, watching with wide eyes as Darkana's power awoke.

Four spikes shot from the crystal who had taken on a liquid appearance, shifting under their eyes. They pierced the Athar's palm with a squishy sound and the two youth let out a silent scream, eyes opening wide, back arching as power flooded their bodies reduced to simple channel.

A silvery swirl of energy spiraled up their arms and down their body to disappear in the grounds.

Both the Doija and Deiser bowed respectfully to the crystal and exited the crypt, locking it behind them and leaving the main room for the parts reserved to them in the building. They were going to support both the Athars and their own Xhan and Xhana in their task with their prayers.

They were not the only ones to think of the two Athars

Djaryle was leaning over the balcony in the main room of the suite she shared with Valera. Looking towards Darkana she saw the building starting to glow slightly.



“So it has begun,” said the Queen, having come to her side.

“It has indeed...” the young female elf sighed. Silence settled around them before Djaryle spoke up again. “Majesty, do you think they will succeed?”

The Queen eyed her.

“I have known Teneb since he was a child and, even if I don’t know the human that well; I can tell that both of them are stubborn... They will succeed, it’s in their blood.”

Djaryle shot her a glance, wondering what she meant by that.

Valera looked back at Darkana, inwardly praying for the success of this attempt and for the lives of the two youths lost in the magical flows. Finally she turned her attention back to the young female by her side, appraising her.

“They will do what their rank asks of them. They have still much to accomplish and will not surrender that easily. You need to believe in them,” she said.

Djaryle nodded.

“I sometimes wonder how a human managed to be that powerful... it’s already a bit frightening to imagine Teneb wielding such powers, but a human...” she shook her head, smile bashfully at the queen. “I apologize for these words your Majesty, I was not thinking.”

Valera looked at her with piercing eyes.

“No I don’t think so, Djaryle. I know who your family is and I know what is expected of you.”

The younger woman paled, turning wide eyes towards her Queen. Valera did not look away and continued.

“I won’t stop you because I feel it will be needed, but I must tell you to be cautious. You are playing with fire and the smallest mistake could be fatal to you but also to all of us.”



“He...” Djaryle was at a loss of words.

“He doesn’t know for now. I won’t stand in your way but I will not help you either. I don’t want to abuse of someone’s trust like this though it might be the only way for you...”

Djaryle bowed her head.

“There is a difference between knowing what you do is right and believing it, but we do it nonetheless.”

Valera nodded tightly to her, gathering her skirts and silently leaving Djaryle alone in the room, watching the glowing building.

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Celen was meeting with the High-Duchess to plan the next day’s evacuations and supplying of the different parts of the Isles.

However he couldn’t manage to focus on the task at hand, thinking of his childhood friend. Suddenly a Magis stepped in the room, interrupting a report from the leader of a town in Keis.

He bowed deeply to the Prince and the High-Duchess.

“Your Majesty, High-Duchess, The Magis and the temples reports huge power flows under the isles and the increase of the levels in the nodes.”

Cerelias looked up from her papers, and hopeful look on her face.

“Are there any problems?”

The man shook his head.

“For now everything is going smoothly, the Magis will keep you updated on the progress, but it looks like the Isles might be saved.”

A large smile spread on Cerelias’ face. She turned to Celen.



“This is marvellous news,” she exclaimed. She frowned slightly, puzzled upon noticing the Prince’s grim face. “What is the matter, my Prince?”

Celen looked at her, eyebrow raised.

“Have you forgotten the risk the Athars, the Xhan and Xhana are exposed to?” He stood up and started pacing.

“They might die, Cerelias... And we don’t know how this ordeal will change them.”

The High-Duchess stood up and walked to Celen’s side.

“Trust me on that point, your Majesty. It’s pointless to torture yourself over events that have yet to take place.”

Celen shot him a tight smile.

“It is something I have yet to learn, Cerelias. He went to sit back and resumed his reading of the different reports. “Well, where were we? He looked at the elf that had been reporting and gave him a pointed look, indicating to pick up his report where he had left it. It was late in the evening when he walked back to his quarters in the castle.

Once he was in his suite, he took out the contact stone he kept on him all the time and called Doryan.

*“My Prince?”*

“Doryan, I trust you are well.”

*“Yes, Sire, Is there a problem?”*

“No, the Magis report that the nodes’ power levels are increasing.”

*“That is good news, My Prince.”*

“Doryan, you know you can call me Celen while in private.”

*“I will remember to do so...”*



“Do you have news from Darkana?”

There was a pause and a sigh was heard.

*“There hasn’t been any news. The Doijas and Deisers have not exited the building which has been glowing since the process started.”*

Celen sat down, taking his head in his hands.

“How was Teneb the last time you saw him?”

*“He and Harry appeared to be fine. A bit antsy but determined.”*

Celen sighed softly.

“Thank you Doryan, give my best regards to my mother, Djaryle, your wife and daughter.”

*“Take care of yourself, Celen and be careful. The Isles will not become safe immediately after the nodes will be filled and the currents stabilized. The grounds will have to be inspected to make sure no slides or avalanches might take place.”*

“I will give orders to take care of that. Take care and keep me informed of what is going on.”

They bid each other good night and closed the communication.

Celen looked at the human’s contact stone. He had carried it with him all day, knowing that should the humans called and he did not answer the consequences would be dire. Changing he went to sleep, hoping that his friend would come out unscathed from this new trial.

The morning came too soon and he tried to distract himself with his work, even going to join in the help with the rebuilding in a nearby town. The Magis reported a steady rise in the nodes’ levels and were busy reinstall the currents under the Isles with the Earth-Elementals’ help.



There had been no change at Darkana or at Kahera, the main temples, situated next to Horevald where Teneb and Harry had been confirmed in their rider status. Only the glowing indicating that the powers were still being transferred.

Knowing the sinking of the Isles had been stalled and even stopped had lifted the mood of all working to rebuild the villages and town. Though many families were mourning the death of their loved ones, the hope of being able to continue to live on their lands did a lot for their spirits.

Despite all of this, Celen had the feeling that the time had slowed down. It was with relief he welcomed the night. He used a Portkey and left for Horevald for the traditional night of the Dead. In every house a tribute was given to the death of the ancestors, composed of flowers, wine, fruits and bread. After an hour during which the elders shared some stories with the youths, a feast was organized in every village or city. People would drink and eat, dance and sing till midnight at which point a huge fire would be lit and kept burning until dawn.

Celen dressed in all black as was asked by the tradition while the females would dress in crimson. He met with his mother in a room that was reserved for the offering to the ancestors and where only family members were allowed.

At dusk, together with Reald, they spent the required hour reminiscing about past ancestors. That done, they left the room, locking it behind them then headed outside to join in the feast going on in the yard.

Celen saw Djaryle and went to ask her for a dance.

He spent the following hours dancing and discussing with other acquaintances of his, old friend from his childhood, his former Blade master, his old nanny. He had been dancing with a lovely Magis girl when he realized it was close to midnight. Offering her his arm and his other to Djaryle, he guided both of them to the huge pile of wood that had been erected in the middle of the yard.



Together all those gathered around started to count down the last seconds of the day.

Celen let watched as his mother approached, a torch in her hand, the flames creating dancing lights in her hair and on her clothes.

He joined his voice to the others.

“Five... Four.... Three... Two... One....”

Cheers erupted as Valera set the wood on fire and as the flames rose in the sky.

The music started again and Celen turned to Djaryle, asking for a dance after excusing himself to the Magis maiden.

Ten minutes later found him sitting on a bench, discussing a particular sword movement with a member of the Elite when he felt something heat up in his pocket.

Paling slightly upon realizing what was happening. He excused himself hurriedly and walked away to the garden to insure some privacy. Erecting several silencing and obscuring wards, he took Harry's contact stone in hand and muttered the activating word.

“Adessa.”

Immediately she turned a pale pink colour and a female voice was heard.

*“Harry! Harry is it you? Answer me! Harry!”*

Celen would nearly feel the worry and panic feeling her voice.

“Who is speaking?” he asked, clearing his throat.

*“Who are you? What have you done to Harry! I need to speak to him!”*

Celen tried to gather his thoughts and spoke up again.



“Harry is away for the moment and we don’t know when he or Teneb will be back. He had me swear an oath to answer calls from his world.”

That did not seemed to appease whoever was speaking.

*“Where is he?”*

“Away, I can’t tell you more for now.”

*“You did not answer me, who are you?”*

Celen sighed.

“You must have met me, I’m Celen, the...”

*“The Elf Prince, I remember. Why did Harry left you his contact stone, he had promised to answer us and come back should we need him!”*

“He did, and only agreed to fulfil a dangerous mission on the condition I took an oath to answer calls for help from your world. What is happening?”

There was a pause as if the girl or woman was trying to assess the situation and his honesty.

*“I don’t know how much you know of what is going on in my world, but Voldemort has been learning the Arts of Necromancy and chose the Halloween night to attempt a huge Summoning. Five minutes ago, a guard of the nearby village managed to reach Hogwarts despite his wounds to tell us the town was under attack by things he described as huge beasts. From the little description we got, they are tall humanoid, black skinned, two legs and three arms...”*

Celen sucked on his breath. Necromancy was a forbidden Art among the Elves, but that did not stop researches from being made and he knew how destructive those creatures could be. Quickly thinking on what little he had read about Demons, he focused on the pictures of the higher ranking ones, hoping against nothing that the humans were dramatizing the situation.



“Focus on the stone, you should received mind pictures of different kind of Demons... tell me which one it is, if you can,” he added in an afterthought.

He had been sending her the picture of a Third-Rank Demon when she answered.

*“That’s it, that’s what is attacking us! There are six of them here! What can we do against them!”*

Celen grew cold. Third Rank Demons... Was that Dark Lord completely crazy! Or he had one damned good thing to offer them...

“They are resistant to most magic... From what I remember, you need to breach their skin for your magic to affect them... Maybe through acid, though I can’t guaranty anything... Try to hold up as long as you can, I will send help to your world as quickly as possible. From where are you calling?”

The female voice did not answer for a moment.

*“Very well, we are at Hogwarts, the school where you came. But the gods help you if you fail to your word. If Harry doesn’t kill you for it, I will.”*

Once that was said, she closed the communication.

Immediately, Celen activated the stone again, using a different password to allow him to contact all the dragon wing leaders.

“Adessera Joal, Ferin, Kobalt and Opheria.”

The stone glowed silver and Celen started to speak.

“The human world is attacked by six third-rank Demons. I want you to send the number of riders you deem necessary to help the humans in their fight. The attack is taking place at Hogwarts. Send someone to fetch Reald, his knowledge will be of help in your fight.”

The four riders did not discuss his words and sent their agreement before closing the communication.



That done, Celen dispelled his privacy wards and walked quickly to his mother who was talking with several nobles from the court.

Apologising, Celen took her aside and warned her of what had just happened. She quickly nodded her approval and told him he would find his uncle in his rooms. The elf had been tired and had retired just after the fire had been lit.

Hurriedly, he made his way to the castle and once inside ran to the Elf's chambers.

He quickly reached his door and started to knock insistently on his door.

"Uncle Reald! Open your door, Uncle Reald!"

After a minute, the door opened and a crossed-looking Reald in a nightgown stepped out.

"What's the meaning of this, Celen!"

The young, took his Uncle's arm and dragged him inside, closing and locking the door behind them.

The older elf shook his nephew's grip off and glared at him.

"Are you going to explain yourself, Celen! What is the meaning of this intrusion and of this behaviour! Your mother will hear of this, you can be sure of this!"

"Uncle, the human world is being attacked by Third-rank Demons as I speak to you."

"And?"

Celen blinked, surprised.

"And I gave my word to Harry that I would send help should his world call for help."

Reald eyed him coldly, his face blank.



“And I reiterate my question, Celen. How is this of any concern to me?”

Celen looked at his uncle, disbelief etched on his face.

“What do you mean? You are the Head Scholar of Horevald, you know more about Necromancy than anybody else. I thought you would agree to go help the humans.”

Reald raised an eyebrow.

“Whatever foolishness the humans called upon them is of little concern to me. The oath you took do not involve me in the least.”

Celen couldn't believe his ears.

“So you refuse?”

“I see no reason to involve myself. If those humans were foolish enough to summon such Demons, they will have to deal with them by themselves!” Reald said coldly. “Now, I will ask you to leave my rooms and let me have my rest.”

Celen shook his head.

“I will not until you have heard me out, Uncle. These Demons were summoned through Necromancy by the Dark Lord. He set those beasts against the school you resided in and they called for the Athar's help. No whether you agree to help or not, several wings of Dragons will leave for the human world. I ask for one of them to come fetch you. Whatever you decide, just send a man to warn the rider and tell him to go or wait.” The young prince paused to take a breath and shot a hard look at his uncle.

“I will now leave you to rest, Uncle. May you sleep well.”

That said, Celen left, closing the door a bit harshly on his way out, leaving his Uncle looking at the spot he had been standing.

After a few seconds, Reald rolled his eyes and sighed, calling for a herald and two servants to be sent to his rooms before going to his



room to get change and then to his study to gather several books, manuscripts and other tools he would need. Fifteen minutes later, he and two servants walked away, carrying many bags and boxes to the yard where the herald had asked the rider to wait for them.

Celen was discussing quietly with a young man Reald recognized as the young Water-Elemental that had been on better terms with the human Athars than most of his peers.

The young prince smiled tightly to his Uncle and watched as they sprang in the air, the blue scales of the Dewat shimmering at the light of the torches and of the giant fire before they disappeared from his eyes.

Slowly, he walked back to his mother to tell her what had happened. He hoped he had done enough because should things come to the worse, he didn't want to be the one to inform the Athar that all his friends and family had been killed by Demons...

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It was Halloween night and Hogwarts had been ready to celebrate the Night of the dead with its usual abundance of food and decoration. The Headmaster had even decided to organize a masquerade after dinner for fourth years and up, the younger years having their own party in their common rooms.

This had been the talk of everyone in school, chasing the gloomy atmosphere that had been weighting on everyone in Hogwarts for the past weeks.

Hermione, Ginny, Padma, Susan and Daphne, a Slytherin, had been discussing their costumes for a week now and had agreed to meet to get ready. She had chosen to dress as Selene from the movie Underworld. Daphne had watched the movie Queen of the Damned during the summer holidays while staying with her aunt after being disowned by her parents and had been adamant about dressing as Akasha and Ginny had chosen Maharet.



Straightening her pants, Hermione checked her costume one last time as well as her glamour charms before going to help Daphne with her hair and jewel. Once all the girls were ready, they all headed out.

She smiled upon seeing the people gathered in the common room. It made her think of a gathering of witches, vampires, monsters and other movie heroes.

The night had started smoothly and soon everyone was discussing, laughing and dancing. For once, the thought of war was far from everyone's mind. That feeling didn't last and the reality soon crashed the celebrations. Midnight had barely passed that a bloodied Auror erupted in the Hall and ran to the Headtable where the Headmaster had stood up, alarmed.

"Fabrice?"

The man stumbled and gripped the table to balance himself.

"Attack... Hogsmead... Please..."

Poppy Pomfrey dressed in her nurse outfit immediately rushed to his side. Sharply, she ordered Hagrid to make him lay down as she ran her wand over his body, scanning it for injuries and curses. She started mumbling, frowning from time to time as Dumbledore talked to her patient.

"Fabrice what happened?"

The French Auror that had been part of the forces sent to England to help in the war looked up to the old man.

"An attack on the v-village. Monsters Demons.... Seven meters high abominations.... Six of them... with a few Dementors and Death Eaters to supervise... They're killing everybody..."

Dumbledore nodded, face grim.

"One last effort, Fabrice, remember the creatures you saw and look at me in the eyes."



Taking the French Auror's head in his hands, he probed at the man's mind and retreated the moment he got what he wanted. Face pale, a grave expression etched on his features, he gently put the head down.

"Thank you Fabrice, now, rest, you did your part."

He turned to Poppy.

"Do all you can to save him," he whispered.

"I'll try Headmaster, get two units and two intensive care units from St Mungos here, and have them set up all their intensive care wards and free beds."

Albus nodded and straightened up. As he looked up, he met all these young faces that were watching him.

With a heavy sigh, he cast Sonorus on his throat, regretting what he was about to say but knowing he wouldn't be able to shelter them any longer.

"Students, I want all those not part of the junior order to go back to their dorms. Two adults will accompany you to call roll and assure your security. The entrance will be sealed once you are all inside."

He leaned on Minerva and whispered instruction to his Deputy as about half of the students left the Hall. The Gryffindor Head of House nodded and walked away, talking with the different giving her instruction and activating the alarm to get all those absent and on call to come to Hogwarts.

Once the doors had closed on the last students, Dumbledore looked at all those young faces.

"Fourth and fifth year will be in charge of the castle security along the adults that will assigned to Hogwarts' defence. Sixth and seventh years will accompany the adults to Hogsmeade. They will ask to take care of those injured and insure they are brought to safety. You will be given portkeys for this. I will ask you to move by groups of two at least, never stay alone. You will also be responsible of the evacuation of the town, you may use a tunnel linking Hogwarts to the cave of



Honeyduke, passwords is Athar as well as your hand placed on the stone with a A carved in it.” Waving his wand, a fogged nightmarish picture of a huge black creature appeared.

“These are the beasts attacking the town. I want you to be aware that you may lose your life on this mission.”

He surveyed the hall, heart clenching at the thought of any of these youths dying... But Harry had been right in saying he wouldn't be able to shelter them much longer.

He looked around.

“You have five minutes to be ready, if some of you prefer to remain in the castle, they can join the fourth and fifth year. Just be sure to tell a Professor.”

Immediately the students splits into small groups and hurried to the Junior Order Quarters that had been set up recently and where they left their fighting uniforms and weapons.

Hermione took the five people under her command and led them straight to their locker.

It had been decided that the Juniors would be separated in groups of six: one in charge, one for healing, one for explosives and diversion and three for fighting, each specializing in a different area.

She took out her costume and put on black pants, a black top with many charms weaved in the fabric and a dragon hide jacket. Carefully taking out all her jewellery she tied her hair back, and smeared black make up on her face. She strapped her wand holster to her forearm and a dagger to her hip. Putting on socks and comfortable boots, she put on her gloves.

The only sign of her belonging to the Order was the golden phoenix on her shoulders.

Suddenly she noticed the contact stone Harry had left her if the need should arise. Looking around, she snatched it and went to the bathroom, telling her team to hurry.



Followed the strangest talk she had ever had.

Instead of Harry answering, it had been that elf prince. She had thought he would refuse to send them any kind of help and had been cursing Harry to the deepest hell for leaving them. Imagine her surprise when she was told that help was on the way and that they seemed to know what kind of creature it was. She shuddered at the picture he had sent her through the stone. She just hoped that he hadn't played with her, because if he had, she would personally make sure that this elf, royalty or not, would regret it. Placing the stone in an inner pocket of her jacket where she also kept a few potion vials, she exited the bathroom and rushed her team outside. They would use the tunnel between the Whomping willow and the Shrieking shack.

All the Juniors met back in the Room of Requirement again. Each team was assigned an area and everyone was given two portkeys. Hermione led them out of the room, mentally going over everything that she might need as she walked out. She was then startled out of her wits as someone stopped her, dragging her arm.

She had her wand out and a curse on her lips as she whirled to come face to face with one of those guys that had come with Harry.

"What is that ruckus about, human? Don't you people have any respect? Some of us want to sleep!"

This did it.

Hermione had not been well disposed towards them to begin, maybe except that horse-crazy man that had allowed a few students to help him. But to have them spout those words at that moment, when they were about to go risk their life snapped her resolve to remain polite.

She turned to her team.

"Tracey, go ahead, I'll catch up."

The Slytherin girl looked at her and the others, before nodding, smirking upon seeing the murderous look in the Gryffindor's eyes.



“Will do so. Be quick.”

Hermione nodded.

“I will, don’t worry about that...”

She turned to the Masters, wand drawn.

With a few swishes and flicks, she had them silenced and petrified.

“Now, you will listen and get this through that thick skull of yours. In case you hadn’t realized, we are at war. You are not in a hotel where we would have to bow to your every whim. The only reason you weren’t cursed from here to Sunday is because Harry asked us not to.”

She paused a little.

“I don’t know what you have against us and you know what I don’t care. All of us are going to fight tonight and some of us will probably die, and I won’t excuse your behaviour any longer. You walk in this school like you own it and are above us. But since you have been here, I haven’t seen you do anything worth speaking of, besides blunders and explosions.”

She lifted up the petrifying and silencing charms and looked at them, contempt in her eyes.

“You’re nothing. I don’t know how you can live with yourselves when you see us fight and die. I don’t know how you can mock us when people die every day to protect their families!” She swished her wand, whispering a blasting hex, sending them flying in the wall.

With a disgusted shake of her head, she hurried away, fuming, leaving the Masters behind her.

Effilin looked at Nerthor and Edevia, Lienhor having not followed them.

“Did one of you understand that gibberish?”



Edevia shook her head, pushing Nerthor off her and getting up.

"I haven't the slightest idea..."

"There is an attack on that village close to the school..." said someone from their right.

Effilin looked up and saw Lienhor leaning against a wall.

"What are you doing here, Lienhor, I thought you had to go see your horses?"

"And miss you getting blasted away by a human girl? I think not..."

Effilin snarled.

"It's not funny!"

Lienhor smirked and shook his head.

"It isn't, not really... well, I'll leave you now."

Edevia looked up.

"Where are you going?"

Lienhor shrugged.

"I feel like fighting... I don't know about you, but I have enough of staying here without anything to do... The Elementals have already left to help... I'm going to give them a hand."

Nerthor straightened and shot him an undecipherable look.

"They are humans... You are ready to help them?"

Lienhor shrugged again.

"I heard monsters were attacking the village and I want to fight... Do whatever you want...."

That said he walked away.



Nerthor's gaze switched from Lienhor's retreating back to Edevia and Effilin for a few seconds before he started on following the horse-riding Master.

"Nerthor? What are you doing?"

The Mind-Magic Master turned to Effilin, biting his bottom lip.

"I don't know about you, Effilin. But I've had enough of being cooped up in this castle. Moreover I wouldn't be able to look at myself again knowing I let children go to their death without doing anything to save them."

Edevia looked at Effilin, unsure.

"Nerthor might not be completely wrong, Effilin."

Effilin looked uncomfortable.

"He's a strong empath; his powers must be playing with his mind."

"Children are fighting and we're staying here doing nothing... I'm sorry but I wouldn't be able to look at my daughter again if I stayed here..."

Edevia hurried behind Nerthor. Both of them ran to their quarters to get changed. Effilin slumped against a wall, deep in thought, torn about the conduct to adopt.

Meanwhile, Hermione had managed to catch up with her team and ducked the Womping Willow blows to press the knot to freeze him.

Six teams and her own managed to pass before the tree started to attack again. Whispering a quiet Lumos, Hermione started to guide her peers along the tunnel.

As she stepped in the Shack, she turned to her team.

"You all know our area. Have your shields up and keep a low profile. Do not try to engage a fight unless this is urgency."



They all nodded and Hermione opened the door of the shack and hurried outside to reach the area she had been assigned to. She was to deal with the Three Broomsticks. However she found herself rooted to the ground as she took in the sight before her.

Hogsmeade was on fire. The shops and houses were burning, the flames rising in the night, bathing the village in red, orange and yellow lights. A large cloud of smoke was visible above the town. Six huge figures could be seen

Roaming the streets, though Hermione couldn't really see what they were.

She took a deep breath and turned to the other, trying to quench the panic rising in his throat upon seeing this nightmarish scene.

"Everyone! Raise a fire-repellent shield. Have a bubble-air charm around your head to protect you from the smoke. Now, be careful and go do your job!"

That said, she hurried down the hill on top of which the Shack was perched. Her team was behind her. As she neared the outskirts of the town, she slowed down, affected by the heat coming from the fires. Casting a heat controlling charm on herself, she stepped in the village, Tracey, Tina and Ian immediately placed themselves around Hermione, Julie, the healer of the group and Daphne, the explosion and diversion expert.

They made their way through the streets, dodging screaming people running down the street. Hermione stopped several of them checking to see if they were injured and asked them to go to the Shrieking Shack and take the passageway to Hogwarts.

She stopped as she heard something approach, a huge something.

Eyes widening, she saw tree-thick legs pass in front of her. Looking up, she felt she had just entered one of her childhood nightmare.

The Auror had called it a demon and she was quite ready to agree with him.



The thing was about seven or eight meter-high and a humanoid appearance. From she could see of his legs they looked like the legs of those dinosaurs she had seen when she was little, the Tyrannosaurus Rex, end ended with thick razor-sharp looking claws.

It had four arms, and eagle claws instead of hands, a thick neck which seemed furry, though she couldn't be sure, the smoke was blocking her sight. The skin was black, ragged, moted and creviced. She couldn't see its face precisely as it passed next to her, punching the second store of a house and blasting it into pieces.

Petrified with fear, she watched as the creature passed in front of her, praying with everything she had it would not notice her.

She turned to her team and saw the same terrified look she knew must be etched on her face.

"Let's go... We need to evacuate our area...."

They nodded dumbly, eyes still fixed to the spot where that monster had stood minutes before.

She resumed her walk, dodging sparks from crumbling houses. Suddenly a huge explosion was heard that made them all jump.

Daphnee shook her head.

"Zonko... all those fireworks, Dungbombs and other tricks must have gone out at the same time..."

Hermione nodded, wiping her forehead.

They finally managed to reach the Three Broomstick. Hermione look around.

"Alright, have your communication pins on. I'm going in with Julie and Tracey. Have all the people you see go for the Shrieking Shack. Be careful Dementors are said to be here. You can all do a Patronus?"

Ian shook his head.



“Sorry Hermione, we’re still learning it.”

She waved her hand, dismissively.

“Not a problem. Tracey, you can do one if I recall, then swap places.”

She looked at the burning inn.

“Here we go.”

Casting a flame freezing Charm, she went in. Calling out for people stuck in the house, she started to inspect the room. It was impossible to go up. The building was about to collapse and the stairs would not support her weight.

She yelled, trying to see if there was someone still in here while casting a small handy charm that made water sprout out of the top of her wand at different level of pressure. They came to a huge **poutre** that had apparently fallen down from the roof, along with large stones. Tables and chairs were lying around, pushed to the floor in the panic.

Suddenly Julie stopped before casting a levitation charm on the heavy piece of wood. Puzzled Hermione and Tracey joined their efforts to hers and managed to move it aside, revealing a man that had been obviously caught under it.

He was heavily burnt and Hermione had to refrain from showing her horror at the view of his body... Julie had already cast several flame freezing charms around and was crouching to his side. She had him drink the contents of a small vial filled with a light blue potion that Hermione recognized as a strong pain killer.

She looked up.

“I’m taking him,” she said with her strong French accent, placing the hand of the man who muttering strings of word Hermione couldn’t hear with all the noise over the length of rope that was the portkey. As she popped out, Hermione and Tracey resumed their searched and found three more people, those however where beyond any help they could provide. As Hermione found the third body, she had trouble breathing. This had been a young girl she had seen helping



Madam Rosemerta when she had came here during the past years...  
A niece of the owner, she thought...

"Hermione? Hermione?"

Tracey shook the Gryffindor.

"There is no time for Gryffindorish hysterics, save it for later!"  
snapped the Slytherin girl.

Hermione nodded absently, her eyes still riveted to the body. She did not see part of the roof fall on their head.

"MOVE!"

She was violently pushed out of the way.

"Damn you Gryffindors!" cursed Tracey, getting both of them up.  
"Snap out of it, getting yourself killed, won't help that kid!"

Julie popped back in the inn.

"There are still people caught upstairs. The man had tried to go in to save them..."

Hermione's head snapped up.

"Did he tell you how many?"

The French girl shook her head.

"No, he kept repeating he had to save them..."

Hermione shot a look at the stairs.

"We can't go up, the staircases won't hold... Tracey did you find anybody else?"

The youth shook her head.

"Nobody else, I think people managed to get out rather quickly..."



Looking around, the Gryffindor prefect found it prudent to exit the inn... From the state of the building, the structure wouldn't resist much longer to the flames...

The three girls hurried outside and met with the rest of the team.

"Hermione, what are we going to do? People might still be stuck on the floors!" blurted Julie, panic peaking in her voice.

"Calm down! Give me a second...."

The prefect looked at the building they needed to access the upper levels... they needed to fly, but none of them with animagus abilities were done with their transformations...

Flying....

Brooms...

"Who can fly well? Quick!"

Ian and Daphnee spoke up.

"Good, do you have a broom?"

She had barely asked that questioned that a deafening cracking sound was heard and the Three Broomstick collapsed on itself.

Horror struck, Hermione watched as the walls crumbled down and the roof smashed on the grounds.

She ran to the ruins, casting Freezing charms and levitating rubble out of the way, imitated by her companions.

"Tina, Make a scan, tell us if there are people still alive!"

The Seventh year waved her hand and the whole area glowed white, three spots of orange appearing.

"Get them out!"



Stumbling over piece of woods and stones as well as bits and pieces from a bathroom, the Gryffindor hurried towards one of the spot, levitating stones and rubble away.

They uncovered the bodies of a woman curled around a bundle of cover that was wailing.

“JULIE!”

The French girl looked up.

“I can’t! Scan the bodies and get them the strongest pain killer you have then portkey them out!”

Hermione looked down.

“Daphnee, get the baby, I’ll take care of the mother. Be quick, he or she is probably suffocating!”

The girl nodded and bent down to take the baby away. The woman moaned, trying to stop her from taking her baby away, but cried out in pain as she did so.

“Don’t move Madam,” said Hermione, trying to be reassuring when she only wanted to curl up in some corner and wait for everything to end. She saw Julie Portkey out as well as Tracey and Tina. Ian followed.

Quickly she ran a quick scan, biting back tears as she saw the results: pierced lung, multiple fractures, spinal section, concussion and a massive internal haemorrhage.

She rummaged through her pocket, finally getting her hand on the pain-killer vial only to find the woman unconscious.

On the verge of breaking down, she levitated the body and placed the woman’s hand on the rope and took hold as she muttered the activating password.

“Lemon drop.”



She immediately appeared in the Infirmary, moving the woman to a stretcher before cancelling the charm. Looking around, she saw people running around, healers calling for potions, bandages, cream, salves for burns, assistants trying to get everything done, patients crying in pain, people sitting on chairs or even on the grounds, a shocked look on their faces, apparently completely lost or sobbing and rocking themselves. She spotted a white robe and called out for the healer.

Pushing the piece of paper that had been conjured by her scan in his hand, she dragged the man to the stretcher before hurrying to a basket filled with new portkeys and using her first one to go back to the place she had left.

She reappeared in the spot where the inn had once stood up and looked around, spotting her team.

“Tina, no other survivors?” Her voice was quivering as she spoke.

The Seventh year shook her head, a depressed expression on her face.

Hermione tried not to see it as she took her communicator.

“Ron, Hermione speaking, nobody left here, what do we need to do?”

Ron and all the Juniors’ leaders had remained at the Shack to coordinate the different team.

There was a pause, and then came the answer.

“The Auror Squadrons and those Elemental guys are luring those things or whatever you want to call them away from the town. The Dementors are being taken care of by the Vampires... trust me you don’t want to know how and the Death Eaters left as soon as they spotted our people... Check the area next to the Hogshead. I sent two teams here but I haven’t heard from them yet...” Ron’s voice was barely audible, but Hermione managed to get the message.

“Alright, I’ll contact you later...”



Closing the communicator, she turned to her group.

“The team around the Hogshead isn’t answering; we need to go check on it...”

They quickly made their way to what remained of the shady pub and started to search for the two teams that had been sent there.

Hermione nearly jumped out of her skin as a shrill scream pierced her ears. She ran, stumbling and nearly falling to the grounds, towards Tina who had been the one to scream. She was trembling, pale as death, pointing to something half hidden in the shadows.

Hermione cast a Lumos charm and immediately wished she hadn’t.

Next to what look like the remains of a female body, the head of Angelina Johnson was looking at them, terror etched to her features. A meter away, several bodies, shrivelled like old prunes, were piled up, some had been mutilated and others seemed to have been simply dried. Hermione felt bile rise in her throat and managed to get it down by sheer will.

Not everybody was as lucky. She heard someone retched and turned to see Julie and Tracey being held up by Tina and Daphnee. Ian was standing at his side, shivering violently and looking definitively ill.

“Nox,” she whispered, relieved as the corpse were once more hidden in the shadows of the half crumbled wall of the Hogshead.

With a trembling hand, she activated her communicator again.

“R-Ron...”

“Hermione? Is there a Problem? You got Angelina’s and Francisco’s team?” The youngest Weasley male sounding tired.”

“Y-Yes.... You c-can say that...”

“What do you mean? What is going on? Why didn’t they report earlier?”



Hermione took a deep breath.

“They’re dead, Ron, they’re all dead.”

There was a silence, before Ron’s voice erupted from the pin.

“WHAT! What!”

“They’re DEAD!” Hermione nearly yelled the last part, crying at the same time, nerves cracking. “They’re dried up as if something sucked out everything.... And Angelina... Her head was cut off... Her face.... She seemed terrified.”

Ron remained silent, but by the various shouts and cries she managed to catch, she guessed he was telling the news to the others.

“Get back to the Shack, I’m calling all the teams back... Get everyone you see to come with you. Get out of here!”

By then Ron’s voice seemed hysterical.

Hermione immediately closed the communication and turned to Ian.

“Can you... Can you conjure a linen so we can take one body with us...? Some of the adult might know what ... what killed them...”

Ian starred at her blankly then nodded, determined. With a flick of his hand, he transfigured a rock into a large piece of black fabric and walked to where the bodies had been piled up.

Hermione watched him and hurried to his side.

“You don’t have to do it, Hermione,” he said, voice dead.

She shook her head.

“And you don’t have to do this alone.”

As quickly as possible, they wrapped the first body they found in the fabric and levitated behind them as they quickly left the scene, followed by the rest of the team. On their way, they met with other groups, but did not tell them of the reason behind the order to leave



the village. Hermione could feel eyes on her and she expected that their faces had to puzzle many of those accompanying them, but she couldn't get herself to talk of what she had seen. Angelina's terrified face seemed to remain printed in her eyes, wherever she looked, she could only see her eyes looking at her.

They finally reached the Shack. Ron ran to her as soon as he spotted her. Passing an arm around her shoulder he helped her sit down on the grass, Ian lowering the body hidden in the linen to rest in down before sitting down too, apparently unable to stand any longer.

Ron squeezed Hermione's shoulder.

"You're going to be OK?"

She nodded weakly.

"Yes," she said, croaking, "I just need a minute..."

Ron squeezed her shoulder, before standing up, approaching the bundle of black fabric; he shot her an inquiring look.

"Is it here?"

Hermione nodded tiredly. She was getting down from her Adrenaline high, and the backlash was hitting her hard.

Ron levitated the body away to a group of adults that gathered around, a few of the crouching and apparently probing what remained of the youth. Hermione hadn't even look at who it was.

The four Seventh year shot up sparks from their wands.

"Everyone!" yelled one of them, Jimmy Warring, the Current Head Boy. "The town can be considered as evacuated. Many inhabitants had managed to escape thanks to the portkeys that were distributed before. Unfortunately quite a lot of them are more or less gravely injured and too many of them are dead."

An Adult Order member picked up the Head Boy's speech.



“You are going to go back to the castle. The area is getting too dangerous. I have the regret to tell you that two teams perished tonight as well as two other of your friends.”

Immediately cries rose in the air, people started looking around trying to find who was missing.

The man continued.

“Angelina Johnson’s team and Fransisco Velasquez’ team died tonight, struck by the creatures you saw attacking the town. Dominique Monard and Zvetlana Kwaszcekaya also lost their life accomplishing their duty. May their names be remembered for their courage.”

There were a few seconds of stunned silence, only broken by the cries and sobs from those close to them. Clapping his hand, the man looked at them.

“Now, all of you did what you could, and what is going to take place is now beyond your capacities. We’ll ask you to get back to the castle and help the healers however you can. Set up patrols and prepare the castle for an attack should we fail.”

The teens nodded faces grim and entered the Shack, hurrying back to the castle. Ron approached Hermione and helped her get up, snaking an arm around her waist and supporting her as they walked back to the castle. They did not speak; very little people did as they made their way back to Hogwarts, trying not to think about the battle that was still going on.

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Effilin had finally caught up with his peers. Together they armed themselves before heading out of the school and riding their horses to the magical town.

They made their way through the burning buildings, spurring their horses forwards. Dodging the people fleeing from the town, they looked around trying to find the enemies.



“Where are they! Why are they all running like that?”

Lienhor made his horse make a complete turn on his hindlegs.

“I don’t know!”

They looked around. Their resolve to help was frail and wavering before the lack of an enemy to fight. Suddenly, a scream was heard above the noise and crackling of the fires.

Nerthor seemed to be struck as if stabbed before he kicked his horse harshly, wrenching a pained neigh from his mount who sprang forwards.

Pushing his gelding to go faster, he unsheathed his sword and brought it down, cutting through the dark, white masked figure that had had his stick pointed to a sobbing man. A squishy sound and a yell indicated that he had reached his aim. Looking above his shoulder, he saw the body sprawled on the floor, well, the two body parts.

He had barely registered his victory that he was hit by a wave of plain malevolence and evil.

Raising his hand and stopping his gelding, he had to grip the mane not to fall down his mount.

He heard more than saw the three other masters arrive and could only watch through his blurred vision as a Dark shape passed before them, striding after two people dressed in the combat outfit of the Elemental Masters: a Silvery grey tunic over black pants, a coloured stripe going from one shoulder to the opposed hip to show their Element.

Both were mounted and pushing their horses to their limits as they galloped through the town, all the while shooting attacks to the monster pursuing them.

“By Solyen...” whispered Effilin staring, horrified, as a second creature appeared through the smoke, “What are those things...”



Edevia didn't bother answering. She saw the creature turn their way and could see in its eyes the moment it spotted them. There was no mistaking the malign intelligence glinting in the dark red eyes that pierced the screen of smoke, preventing her from seeing its face in details.

Whatever it was, it knew what they were and didn't like them... The monster took a step toward them and it sealed her resolve.

"Whatever it is, I don't think we should wait for it to come to us!"

Lienhor turned to her, face solemn.

"What do you propose, then?"

She looked at where the two masters had disappeared.

"No Elemental masters would have engaged a fight alone against those things... They must have a plan..."

Lienhor nodded.

"Very well, I just hope for our sake we are right!"

Effilin was looking at them, disbelief etched in his feature.

"You ask me to flee like those humans before this... this abomination! No rider flees from danger!"

Edevia could only shake her head.

"You are crazy, Effilin!" She shot the monster a look. It had taken an almost predatory attitude and she was reminded of this feline she had seen in that human school, just before it was about to pounce on its prey... And this time, they were the prey. "We have no hope of winning alone against it!"

Effilin shook its head stubbornly.

"We are masters! We are riders! We can defeat all those that dare oppose us!"



Edevia spurred her horse, bringing close to Effilin and slapped him as hard as she could.

“Are you listening to what you are saying, you idiot! This thing is going to kill us all! We cannot win without help!”

Lienhor pushed his horse next to her.

“Edevia is right, Effilin. We need help. And we need to go now!”

Effilin looked at Nerthor who was leaning against his gelding's neck, half knocked out by the evil radiating from the creature and against which his strongest shields were barely working.

“Nerthor, don't tell me you are agreeing with them...”

The Elemental shook his head.

“Evil... It's pure evil... need help... Dragon... help... run...”

Lienhor took Nerthor's horse's reins and shot a cold look to Effilin.

“Do whatever you want, Effilin. I'm going.” He kicked his stallion's flank lightly, dragging the gelding behind him. Edevia pursed her lips before following the Horse riding Master.

Effilin snarled and unsheathed his sword.

“A rider never gives up!” Kicking the flanks of his mount, he charged at the creature which was striding towards him, having taken Edevia and Lienhor's move as the start of the chase.

Effilin raised his sword and flung curse after curse, pure magical balls to the thing, only to see it absorbed by its skin. His eyes widened as he took in the face of the monster, realizing too late his mistake.

“Demon...” Trying to make his horse turn, he watched with horror filled eyes as the Demon brought one of his arms down with a speed surprising for his build. The razor shaped claws glinted in the light of the flames and Effilin closed his eyes before his pending death.

“Expelliarmus!”



He heard someone yell and felt something collide with his chest, blasting him off his horse and several meters away.

He hit the grounds with a pained grunt and watched his horse was killed; the claws closed on him, raising it up in the air, the terrified neighs of the stallion filling the air before stopping at the beast opened its jaws and ate it.

Effilin was petrified, laying in the dirt and soot. With disbelieving eyes he saw five figures on those flying sticks, which he had seen the humans use before, zoom around the beast, distracting it. The abomination seemed to only get enraged even further as they kept shooting curse at it. None of them seemed to have any effect on it.

“Move aside, you idiotic boy!”

He felt someone drag him up. Looking around, he couldn't see anybody and started to struggle thinking some evil magic was taking him away.

“Stop that struggling! Do you want to be killed that bad!”

“W-Who are you? I can't see you!”

A dry chuckle was heard from his right.

“Oh! You're just scared by Old Tonio's cloak?”

Suddenly, Effilin felt a silky feeling material glided around his form and an old male human appeared. He was about his height with scruffy pepper and salt hair, a bushy short beard, sunken in brown eyes and angular features. Several scars marred his neck and a deep one cut his cheek, standing out against his tanned skin.

“Come on, boy, don't let your self be put out by those scars...Death Eaters never played nice and I was lucky to escape from them with my life...”

Effilin frowned. Death Eaters..., he had heard that name before...

“What are Death Eaters?”



The old human laughed dryly.

“Good one, boy...” He shot him a look and raised an eyebrow at the annoyed face of the strange man he had saved. “You’re not joking, aren’t you? Don’t you know that Death Eaters are the Dark Lord’s servants? His damned lackeys, wearing dark robes and a white mask? Who do you think you were fighting?” Tonio let escape another gruff chuckle. “I knew you were an idiot, son, though a foolishly brave one to charge at Demons like that... You were a Gryffindor for sure...”

Effilin just looked at him, completely lost. What the hell was a Gryffindor?

The old man tilted his head, examining him.

“Alright, son?”

Effilin nodded, his pride kicking in and he realized this human had just saved his life. It was not a thought he particularly liked.

The old human started to rummage through a large bag, taking a vial filled with a clear green liquid.

“Take that, Energy potion... It will do some good. Go on, drink it, we don’t have all the time in the world, son!”

Effilin nodded and drank it, not even protesting. The old man reminded him of his own Mentor when he had been a Daryn. A few seconds later, he felt refreshed as if he had just gotten up from a good night rest.

“Better, eh,” said the man, pocketing the now empty vial. “I don’t know who you are son, but if you are that keen on fighting, chose your opponent a bit more wisely...”

The human crouched down, took a twig and started to draw in the dirt.

“The town is being evacuated to Hogwarts; Merlin blesses Dumbledore for his foresight. The aurors and some strange guys with green or blue hair are baiting those creatures to the plain behind the



town, at the edge of the forest. You'll find them here if you want that bad to help and get yourself killed."

Effilin looked down at the roughly sketched plan of the town and nodded.

The old man chuckled lowly.

"Gryffindors... Absolutely no sense of self-preservation. Here, take those potions... Those damned things did not seem to be affected by your magic; maybe one of those will do the trick. Do not get some on yourself, they are nasty..."

He took out several little bags and handed the big one to Effilin.

"Don't jostle them too much or can guaranty a nice little explosion..." he laughed nastily. "Now, I wish you luck, son, because you're going to need a lot of it!"

That said, the man limped away and Effilin realized the human had a deep cut to his thigh that seeped blood through his pant.

In two strides he had caught up with the man.

"Hum-... Wizard. Do you want me to heal you?"

The old wizard turned to him a derisive smile on his face, twisting his scar in a nasty way.

"Gryffindor to the core. Do not waste magic on me, son. I'll be alright. Focus on staying alive, I can take care of myself."

Shaking his head, chuckling, the old man, limped away for a few meters before wrapping himself in his cloak and disappearing.

Mind reeling with what had just happened, looked down at the bag of vials in his hand. For a few seconds he just stood there, trying to order his thoughts a little. Finally, shaking his head with a snarl, he shouldered the bag and broke into a small run and headed straight for the plain up in the North of the town.



Let it not be said that humans would fight while an Elf would run away.



## Chapter 32

Kobalt was internally shaking as he disappeared from Horevald's sky to go to the human world. Celen had been short in his explanations, but the mention of Third-rank Demons had been enough to scare him. He remembered vividly the Demon Enrys had summoned the night of the ball.

The thought of having to fight Six Demons with a higher rank was chilling.

Opheria and he had agreed with Joal and Fenrin to send four wings and have another ready to go to help or take the place of those injured.

They were both leading the Athars' wings. Keroan's wing had also joined them except for three or four riders that had been replaced by riders from Nora's wing. The fourth wing was Sindhar's with some of Nora's riders to take the place of those having not volunteered. The rest of Nora's wing would stay behind as reserve as well as several riders to take the place of the riders she had sent to complete Keroan and Sindhar's teams.

They reappeared in the night sky above the human school. Kobalt could see the fires raging away. He signaled the riders to follow him as he flew away towards the flames, three riders spiraled down to the school's grounds to get Reald and two other scholars he had asked to come down, as well as the many documents he had regarding Demons.

They swept over the burning town, looking for people or wizards in the streets.

Kobalt frowned as he could see nobody under them. Demons of that height could not hide like this; even with that acrid and thick smoke they would have seen them.

Suddenly, a roar erupted behind them, startling all of them. The Dragons immediately answered in kind, their own roar covering the noise of the fires as they made a U-turn and hastened towards the North.



Kobalt blinked, trying to clear the tears the smoke had brought to his eyes.

He had barely time to react as a tongue of black goo was shot at them. Immediately the riders swerved to the sides to avoid it before taking back their place.

Kobalt finally got a good view of the battleground. The wizards and masters as well as what looked like Vampires and Goblins had managed to gather the six Demons in a wide plain and had engaged the fight from this vantage point, the battle was not turning to their advantages. Several forms on wooden sticks were zooming around the Demon docking as black goo was thrown at them or those red lava like vines rolled up their arms seemed to shot at them, whistling like whips.

Those Demons were stronger than the one they had met at Horevald. Though they shared similarities like their skin and general figure, the resemblance stopped here.

Kobalt cast the Sonorus charm that Harry had taught him on his throat and started to speak.

“Riders. Those are Third-rank Demons. Our task is to destroy them. Prince Reald will send me any useful information that I will relay to you. I ask you to be cautious but spare no efforts in this battle. You were volunteers and I commend you on your courage. May the Nine bless you and lend you their strength tonight!”

“Aye!” All the riders shouted, raising their sword in the air. Slowly the wings started to dive, the dragons letting out a mighty roar as if defying these creatures from the Abyss.

The six Demons turned their head to the skies and Kobalt strengthened his hold on his mental shield as he was assaulted with a wave of malevolence and hate so strong he nearly fell from Polath’s back.

He swerved on the left and headed for one Demon. The face of that creature was firmly etched in his mind: Bull-like with wild boar’s horns spouting from its jaws and spiraling on the sides of his head. Red



glowing eyes with no pupil, nor iris, a furred neck completed the nightmarish picture.

He led his wing in a steep dive, passing close to the demon, summoning his Elemental abilities and shot sharp ice thick spikes at it.

Horried, he watched as the breached skin oozed dark purple goo and the wound closed under his eyes, leaving no mark of his attack.

How were they supposed to kill those things!

They rose up and Kobalt shot his ice spikes again, this time aiming for the face. However the Demon had another idea and its eyes glinted malevolently.

/Riders/

The voice was deep and echoed in their bones. Kobalt, nor any of the other people fighting could refrain from shivering as the demon started laughing.

/My brothers! Tonight we will feast on the Dragon's flesh/

The Five other Demons smiled wickedly and fought in earnest.

Suddenly, Kobalt saw one of those red vines hit one of those wizards on the flying stick. The man screamed while struggling against the vine as it wrapped around him. Immediately, three other figures started to attack the vine and shoot curses at it to no avail. With horror filling his eyes, Kobalt watched as the vines suddenly retreated and twined back up the Demon's arm, the dried shell of the human falling to the grounds.

Activating the stone, he immediately warned all the riders.

*"Riders, Avoid being struck by the red vines on their arms at all cost."*

He closed the communication and attacked in earnest. His stone heat up and he immediately rose in the sky out of reach to listen to who was speaking.



“Adessa Kobalt listening.”

*“Reald speaking. We have been researching those demons in the archives. To destroy them, the easiest would be to destroy the focus stone, but from what the wizards here told me, this is not possible. The over way is to manage to destroy the runic stones used to anchor them in this plane.”*

Kobalt frowned.

“What stones?”

*“To make things simple, they are anchored through a runic stone that is somewhere in their body, most likely in their heart if the archives are to be trusted.”*

“You mean we need to cut their heart open?” Disbelief colored Kobalt’s voice. “We cannot even cut their skin deep enough to hinder them!”

*“You can’t, their skin have regenerative properties. You need to find a way to dissolve it or something that could pierce it deep enough to destroy the stone... The wizards have all their Potion Masters or so they called those greasy haired people working on an acid to help you... Maybe the Elementals could also come up with something by combining their elements, or the dragons’ fire... Their fire always seemed able to destroy everything it hit.”*

Kobalt could feel a headache coming.

“Understood. Thank you Prince.”

*“Stay alive, I will contact you should we find other leads.”*

Relaying what he had just been told, Kobalt returned to the fight. The red whip-like vines seemed to have multiplied and the Demons were now shooting balls of Dark magic, Black fire to their opponents. From his vantage, Kobalt could see people blink in and out, carrying the wounded away.



The Dragons had changed their tactics. All the Elemental Dragons had gathered and were trying combined attack, attempting to manage to affect the Demons with no success, except enraging the creatures even more. The Azureans, Dawnris and Duskers were covering them during the attacks and sometimes giving a hand to the wizards on the sticks. The riders hadn't lost anyone to the vines for now, their abilities to pop away saving their life more than once; the same could not be said for the humans. Ten others had been struck and killed. Nothing seemed to be able to cut those vines once that had reached their target. Kobalt watched, helpless as another unfortunate was caught and started screaming.

Rage filled him and he launched a rotating razor sharp ice disc at it, knowing it would do little good, conveying all his rage and desire to help that man.

He was then surprised when the disc cut through the vine like butter. Sweeping down, Polath managed to catch the wizard who was still wrapped in the vines that were drying by the seconds and fell to dust before they landed.

Leaning on his dragon, the young Elemental wondered what had been different this time, why it had worked. His thoughts were interrupted as three wizards ran to him.

A deeply scarred man had his wooden stick out and one of his eyes was twisting in his eye sock, accompanied by a blond man and a small dark-haired woman.

The scarred one leveled his stick to Kobalt's head.

"Who are you boy!" he grunted.

Kobalt sighed.

"Put that stick away, wizard. Neither me or my men are threats to you."

The man's cheek twitched as one of his eyes whirled madly but he did not lower his wand.



“How can I trust your word, boy?”

Running his hand in his long blue hair, the young Water-Elemental tried to find a way to convince this wizard he was here to help.

He waved his hand at his companions.

“Do you think I would risk my men’s life if I wasn’t here to help you, human?”

The man seemed to think it over before lowering his stick.

“Very well, but you still didn’t answer my question, boy, who are you?”

Kobalt gritted his teeth.

“I’m rider Kobalt, second of Athar Harry Potter.”

The scarred man tightened his grip on his wand.

“You’re one of them, then. Why are you here when your little friends made it very clear they wouldn’t lift a finger to come to our help?”

Kobalt frowned.

“Not all of us think like them, wizard. Now, whether you want our help or not, we will be involved in this fight. So either you manage to put all grieves aside and work with us, or we’ll work each on our sides.”

The other man placed his hand on his companion’s arm.

“We aren’t in a position to refuse help, Mad-Eye.”

The wizard grunted, lowering slightly his stick.

“I don’t trust them, but I don’t suppose you’ll hear anything about it... So, boy, what help can you give us?”

Kobalt dismissed the boy's comment; he wasn’t going to raise that easily to bait.



“Cover during attacks, our Elemental people and dragons are trying to find a way to deal with those vines.”

The man that had been called Mad-Eye nodded.

“Good,” he then started to explain what they had planned in clipped sentences. Kobalt listened closely, relaying that information to all the Wing Leaders and Seconds. As the wizard ended his explanations, he nodded shortly.

“We’ll assure an aerial cover and attack it,” he stated sharply.

“That will do... Be careful.”

Kobalt looked at the woman that had spoken, one eyebrow raised.

“I return this piece of advice, witch. It seems to me that you are the one more at risk in this battle.”

Nodding at the humans he ran to Polath and both of them sprang in the air, rising far above the demons.

Activating his contact stone, Kobalt focused on the riders.

*“To all the riders, the humans are going to focus their attack on one Demon and try to trap it. Our job will be to cover them and keep the other Demons occupied... Be careful and sharp. Do not let yourself be surprised by this scum. To all the Elemental wielders,”* Kobalt paused, thinking back to the moment he had managed to sever a vine, *“Try to send your attacks against the vines while using strong positive emotions as focus...”*

He felt a bit silly saying that, but that was the only thing he could think of that had been different when he had used his powers.

The different units parted going into several downward spirals, the dragons shooting fire as they passed next to the Demons. Kobalt had to refrain from gagging as he saw the dark flesh melt under the Draconian flames, a horrible stench reaching his nostrils. He had to refrain from cursing as the charred wound started to close itself albeit way more slowly than usual.



One more time Polath, and this time, I'll combine my own power to your fire....>

Focusing on the moment he had been bonded to his dragon, Kobalt, called upon his powers, as Polath did a second passage next to the Demon right side, side, ducking under one of his arm.

Now!>

Conveying all the joy and bliss he had felt upon bonding to Polath, Kobalt unleashed a spiraling jet of hail and water that intertwined with his Dragon own fire.

The attack hit his mark is the screech coming from the beast was any indication.

Kobalt looked back once Polath had brought them out of reach and saw a gaping wound in the Demon side. Unlike the other wound she didn't seem to close itself, or if it did, it was extremely slowly.

*"To all the riders, focus your attack on highly positive emotions and feelings. That seems to affect them..."*

A loud roar was heard and he saw a rider, Ulan and his Dawnris caught in the red vines. Immediately, four riders dove to its help. However, the Demons seemed keen on keeping their prey as a hail of red vines started to weave a barrier between them and their fallen companion.

A minute later, before their horrified eyes, the dried shells that had been the Dawnris and Ulan fell to the grounds, shattering into dust upon hitting it.

All the Dragons started to roar and Kobalt had to refrain from openly crying as he ducked a magical attack of one Demon. The creature that had caught Ulan leant his head backward and let out a shout.

/Dragon flesh! We shall feast on them/



The five other Demons echoed his shout and a flurry of black magical balls shot in the air. The red vines expanded and started to slash through the air.

Eyes widening with fear, Kobalt, clinging to Polath's neck, flattened himself to the Dragon's body as the Dewat ducked and dodged all the attacks before rising once more out of reach.

Catching his breath, Kobalt looked around. The Demon he had hit hadn't still healed his wound. Lips tightening, a deep thoughtful frown barring his forehead, he activated his stone.

*"Everyone pop out of reach, we'll attack in waves: two Elementals covered by four riders will attack a Demon then pop out and another team will follow. Be cautious, if you are hit, pull out immediately."*

Immediately the Wings started to gather and reorganize themselves. Twelve Elementals, Elemental gifted or riders with Elemental Dragons dove, twenty-four riders following, covering their backs.

Only five managed to score a hit, the others having had to pop out of harm's way.

Kobalt signaled for the second group to dive and followed as well, focusing on a Demon that had borne the brunt of two attacks.

Popping in and out, swerving to the right and left, diving and rising up brutally, Polath and his rider, managed to get a clear shot at the abomination and struck, managing to cut rather deeply into an arm.

They popped away, missed by mere seconds by whipping vines.

Kobalt was trying to calm down his racing heart as he felt his stone heat against his skin.

"Kobalt listening?"

*"Reald speaking. One of those Potion Masters managed to come up with an acid that might work on those beasts. They are preparing batches of it as I speak. Apparently one of the stick wavers managed to get a chunk of Demon's skin to them and they have been*



*experimenting with it. Caution everyone to stay clear of this acid; it is extremely potent and dangerous."*

"Good, the situation is not looking up," hearing a cry, Kobalt paused to look around and saw a wizard on those flying had been caught in the vines again. He saw Opheria and someone else dive down to try to save this unfortunate... Focusing back on his talk, he resumed his answer.

"We have been able to affect them by using strong positive emotions as focus, but it doesn't do a lot."

*"I was told Vampires are fighting with the humans, try to contact them. Their magic is foreign to us, maybe they know of a way we are ignorant of."*

"I will."

*"May the Nine guard you and your men, Kobalt."*

"May they bless you."

Ending the communication, Kobalt watched grimly as the riders swept down once more to attack.

*"Focus on those harmed. The humans have found a way to affect them."*

Several Dragons popped out to aim for the two Demons that had been struck the hardest.

From the corner of his eye, Kobalt saw several wizards ran to those he had talked to. He focused back on his own fight as a vine hit him on his side, a blinding pain shooting from the wound as he called on his Elemental power to push it away, Polath popping out to avoid two others. The two Demons were sporting many deep gashes, results from the past attacks of the riders. One of them had lost an arm and had the side of his hellish head charred.

*"Attack, try to burn the vines or cut off their arms. Beware their magic."*



Just as he said that, two riders were hit full-force by two black balls of crackling magic. They fell from their dragons and downwards, screaming and withering as magic coursed along their bodies. Their two dragons swept down and caught them in their claws disappearing from Kobalt's eyes.

With a snarl, Kobalt dove, unleashing his powers, a wave of ice, hail and water surrounding him as he attacked one of the Demons, yelling his rage, tears coursing down his face as his empathic shields were hit by waves upon waves of anguish, fear and despair.

A loud roar filled with fury and pain echoed in the plain, covering the cries and noises of the battle, stilling all the belligerents. A vindictive smirk appeared on Cobalt's face as he saw wizards on those wooden sticks throw what looked like large cauldrons filled with what he guessed was the acid Real had talked about.

*“To all the riders, the humans are using an acid against the Demons, stay clear of it.”*

Hope rising in his chest, he dove back into the melee, thinking for the first time that they might have a chance...

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Adrian observed the battle from his perch in an old and ancient oak. The tidings of the battle seemed to be changing. He smiled darkly, his two fangs glinting in the light the many lights the wizards had set up to lit the plain and allow them to see those Demons.

He had not given his men the signal to join in the fight yet. He wanted to see for himself if he had allied himself to the right side and it seemed as if the old crackpot in that school might have gathered powerful enough allies to win that round.

He had been right to align himself to the young Attar, though him being bound to the old lizard presented a problem.

“Caesar, spread the word, we attack.”

A shift in the air was the only hint of a Vampire presence.



He had had the boy watched since he defeated the Dark Lord as a mere babe. Thorough his years at his relatives and at Hogwarts, the Potter boy had been watched, observed, studied. The Vampires had wanted to understand how that mortal had been able to survive the Death Curse without being one of them or having Vampire blood.

To this day, they still didn't understand how he had been able to rebound that curse. But they had still watched.

"Lorna, go to your group and have them set up our little "surprise" for our guests," he said in a whisper, eyes not leaving the scene displaying before him while his thoughts wandered.

As he had joined Hogwarts, they had waited with eagerness to see the proof of the power this mere, skinny boy was expected to wield. They had been disappointed. He had been average at best, not really standing out, if not for his abnormal luck. So their watch had relaxed a little. However when word spread among the underworld creature that a Basilisk had been slain by a Parselmouth, Adrien had asked for information and imagine his surprise to know that again, the Potter luck had struck. He hadn't understood why the old meddler hadn't started to train his weapon... It still remained a mystery to him. The rumors of his ability to cast a full Patronus at thirteen had been the proof that the boy had to be powerful one way or another. So the Vampires resumed their watch, in particular as the Dark Side started to get more and more daring. They kept an eye on the boy during that stupid Tournament.

How the old coot hadn't known something was wrong, Adrien couldn't fathom. He preferred to think the dotting fool had wanted to test his Boy-Who-Lived.

Voldemort's resurrection had proven to be a problem to Adrien.

"Stefanov, you're ready?" A nod answered his question as a stocky blond-haired Vampire looked up from the bag he had brought with him. "Once you're done, go with Lorna to give a hand to the Goblins, protect their mages."

The first Dark War had back-lashed heavily against the Vampire. They, who had been happily ignored by the wizarding world, had



been labeled as Blood-thirsty monsters deserving to be destroyed. Adrien and most of the Ancients had kept out of the conflict. But the repercussions on their race had been such that they had stepped in at the first whisper of Voldemort's return. After getting rid of the most troublesome elements in the hierarchy, most of them youngsters far too excitable, they had enforced their rule. Secrecy was a must. The Vampires would keep to the shadows and wait to see what would happen. The Ancients would decide of the conduct to follow.

Allying themselves to the Dark Lord hadn't appealed to Adrien a lot. He hadn't appreciated the careless attitude Voldemort had had towards the vampires that had joined their ranks. That was added to the fact that the Dark Lord had his Vampires create way too many Childes.

However, joining the Light didn't go well with the Immortals. They would be treated as pariahs and distrusted too much to be treated as equals.

So they had waited.

After all when you have lived through more than two millennia, what's a year?

And the boy had disappeared. Adrien had quickly heard from his spies of what had happened and this had changed the whole game.

While the Dark Lord had made the outcome of the war lean more and more on his side through his studying of the Old Arts and Blood Magic, a thing that had unsettled the Vampires greatly. However, the involvement of the Dragons changed everything.

"Massan, you're done?" A black woman was hunched over a series of small metallic disks, mumbling to herself.

"Nearly, Adrien, just give me one more minute."

Adrien had once more settled for watching. He knew of the prejudice running rampant through those races of hypocrites, the boy's luck might not be enough to have him survive.



But he had and had bonded though to whom, this had been rather.... surprising.

Adrien had really hoped not to meet that overgrown deadly magical lizard. Knowing who was the dragon bonded to the boy had opened Adrien's mind to a whole new set of possibilities. If the Elders had bound themselves again to mortals; that meant that something was amiss to have provoked such an event.

But he hadn't been sure of his decision even then. Whispers of what Voldemort was doing had reached his ears and he had stalled the Dark Lord's attempts to get the Vampires to see how the Light would respond. The attack on the Goblins and their consequent alliance with the Light had tipped the balance in favor of the Light added to the use of Necromancy from the Dark Lord and the display of power from the boy had sealed Adrien's decision.

Only Vampires were allowed to meddle with Death. It was an implicit agreement on both sides that had been respected so far. To raise the Dead was Unforgivable and repulsing to the Vampires. They had purged their rank from any Voldemort friendly members and had started to organize themselves and equip their Army.

He shook his head, focusing on the situation at hand.

Turning to his right, he nodded to his Lieutenants. Hien-Na disappeared in the Shadows while Maximilien and Optah smiled coldly, their eyes glinting in the dim light of the torches.

They hadn't used their full powers for a long time and relished the opportunity to show the World why Vampires had been feared in the Ancient Times.

"Some fun at least..."

Adrien bowed his head.

"Fun indeed my friend, now, let show that Dark Lord, the extent of Vampires power."



He stepped out of the Shadows, followed by the sixty fighters they had brought with them. All of them over five hundred years and trained thoroughly under the care of Adepts. Adrien looked at the battlefield and pointed to a Demon that had suffered little injury since the beginning of the battle.

The Dragons were taking care of two; the wizards helped by the Elementals on foot of two others, the Goblins had apparently found a weakness to exploit as the fifth Demon was starting to tire. The sixth was for them. It had been long since they had fought a full-fledge, true to Hell, Demon.

He looked around, his eyes spotting all his peers. With a dark smile, he dug into his full Vampiric powers, his eyes turning black.

"It's hunting time."

He raised his right arm, unsheathing his sword. Channeling his own power through the blade, he raised it and slashed down. A bolt of grey power shot up, cutting one of the red vines like it would have done a twig.

The Demon roared, gathering the attention of all those gathered around. It looked down and some confusion passed in its red eyes.

/Vampires/

Adrien smirked but just made forwards motion of his hand.

Several Vampires jumped in the air, going for the vines, Massan freed her disks that immediately shot towards the Demon.

/What are you doing, Vampires/

Adrien laughed.

/What does it look like, Demon? We're preserving our food source and our interest./ He had decided to use Demonic tongue, though the guttural language was soreness to his ears.

The Demons let out a low growl.



/Traitors/

Adrien raised an eyebrow.

/I don't think so, Demon. This is our territory: to you the Underworld, to us the land of Living. You are the one breaking the balance./

/We have as much right to fresh food as you traitors/

Adrien shook his head, eyes flashing.

/You have no business on these lands, imbecile. Go back to your dark pit/

As one, the Vampires attacked.

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Effilin ran through the streets, avoiding the large flames consuming the houses. The heat coming of the fires made droplets of sweat ran down his soot covered face.

Unsettled by his meeting with the old human mortal, he was trying to understand the human's behavior. A smaller part of him was also reeling at the idea that he had needed help from such lowlife...

Deciding to deal with those troublesome thoughts that threatened his well built conceptions, he focused back on the situation on hand.

Face set on his aim, he ran towards the origin of the noise. A wall crashed on his right, making his jump aside to avoid it.

He choked on the smoke, eyes watering. Casting a quick charm around his head to allow him to breath more freely, he kept running towards the noise.

His eyes widened as he took in the scene unfolding before his eyes.

There wasn't one of these abominations... they were six.



He spotted his fellow riders fighting along the Elementals. He headed for them, intent on fighting by their side. He didn't trust humans to watch his back.

He saw a vine whip out toward Nerthor who was busy fending magical blasts.

Jumping forwards, he raised this sword to block the red thing, crashing into Nerthor's horse in the process.

However he had forgotten his strength had been decreased as had his magic and reflexes. The force of the blow hit him full force and he nearly yelled out at the pain shooting through his arm, feeling it crack.

Gritting his teeth and using his mind arts training, he willed the pain away and diverted the attack on the side, panting both from the pain and effort he had just made.

A disk of ice whizzed past his head and stuck the vine, cutting it like butter.

He shot a withering glare at Nerthor, yelling at him to put himself in safety or open his eyes. Through his rants, he deflected the attacks issued by the Demon, focusing on the more physical ones.

He was catching his breath, getting advantage of a brief respite in the attacks as the Demons seemed distressed by something happening next to the forest.

Glancing quickly in its direction, his low lip curled in barely repressed distaste.

Vampires.

Both races had always been bitter rivals, be it in knowledge, Magic or power. However, he couldn't deny that they were those most likely to be able to fight those ... abominations on equal grounds.

He watched fascinated as four Vampires dressed in flowing black robes took position around a Demon and raised their hands, while



many other Vampires attacked the demon. Several of them even went as far as to climb up the Demon's body and plant some things in its body, ducking all the attacks towards them. The four ones standing around at some distance raised their hands and Shadows seemed to fly to them like moth to a light. They swirled around them, swarming, flickering in and out of Effilin's view. They spread, little by little, linking the four Vampires whom Effilin had recognized as the infamous Shadow Adepts that had been rumored to exist though many believed them to be only myths or tales for the gullible.

A net that seemed to absorb the light coming from the torches slowly formed around the Demon. The shadows composing it seemed to be alive.

As Effilin couldn't look away from it, he finally caught sight of a few fluttering shiny things flying around the Demon.

He smirked, watching as the Hit-Vampires, who were recognizable by their purple lined robes, had climbed up the other Demon the Vampires were targeting, the one the goblins had been fighting. They got rid of those red vines little by little. Several vampires were hit by them, but didn't seem really affected by them. Maybe that was because they were already dead...

He however didn't ponder on it and kept fighting next to Nerthor, protecting the man mainly. Suddenly a sharp cry made him whirl on his heel and he saw a red-haired wizard who was being taught the way of the Elementals shoot in the air, caught in those vines...

He frowned but kept on fighting. The humans would deal with it, and even if they didn't, it was just one less human in this world.

"Charlie!"

The shrill scream made him jump. He turned and so a plump middle-age human try to make her way to the demon.

It had to be his mother, given her distraught expression.

"Charlie!"



She tried to fight the man holding her back, while others were trying to get to their comrade who was screaming as the vine drained him.

Effilin stood there, watching.

What could he do...? He could go and help, but this was a human....

The red-haired woman started sobbing as the cries from the wizard who apparently was her son started to get less and less loud.

Effilin looked up and it wasn't a human he was caught in those vines, it was his own son...

With a snarl, he jogged to a wizard and took the vial from whatever the humans had been using against those Demons then jumped forwards and climbed up the Demon's body.

Within a few seconds, he had climbed up to his arm, ducking the few attacks aimed at him. Fortunately for him, the demon was distracted by the attacks directed at him by the Elemental masters and their students as well as the acid the wizards were using on them. The liquid was doing real damages to the creatures. But now was not the time for that.

He uncorked the vial and poured it over one of his throwing knives, having muttered a quick protection charm before hand. Then, trying to steady himself, he took aim and threw the blade. With bated breath he watched it fly towards his target and hit it dead on, cutting through it easily. Thanks to the acid.

He didn't have time to rejoice he was projected in the air violently.

That was then that he realized that he was six meters in the air, if not more and that the landing would hurt.

He closed his eyes, resigning himself to his fate.

Suddenly he was caught in a strong and nearly painful grip. Not believing in his luck, he kept his eyes close, bracing himself for the impact with the grounds, but he was merely dropped on the grounds.



He scrambled to his feet and looked around him.

His eyes widened as he spotted glinting azure scales in front of him.

“Er-Erkath?”

The massive Azurean tilted his head aside.

Indeed, you were warned that should your opinion and behavior change, we would come back...

Effilin felt a bubble of hope rise in his chest.

“Then, we...”

The Dragon cut him.

Our bond is still severed. You took the first step toward it, but you still have a long way to go...

Effilin bowed his head, disappointed. He had thought his punishment over...

The Azurean stretched his neck to put his head to his rider's chest.

The Elders decided of your fate. I cannot go against their word, my bonded. You just need to open your mind...

“I-I hoped that...”

You still have a long way to go, my bonded, but you are on the right path... However, now is not the time for this...

Effilin nodded dumbly and jumped on the Azurean's back as the dragon bent his forelegs to help him. Once Effilin was sat securely, the Dragon soared in the air, joined by three others.

It was then that Effilin realized that his three other companions had also been found by their own dragons. However, given Lienhor's face, he guessed that the Horse Master had been the only one to have his bond reformed. He tried not let the pang of jealousy and envy take hold of him and focused on the battle going on under him.



Looking through the skies for the first time, he realized that four wings of Dragons had come to the human's help.

We'll join the wings.

Erkath had barely spoken that a Dewat appeared next to them.

The rider was that Elemental that had sided with the human, Kobalt, if he remembered well. He had done well in his class from what he recalled.

“M-Master Effilin!” The Elemental’s eyes widened then went out of focus for a few seconds. A blank look spread on his face and his lips tightened in a thin line.

“Very well, you and the other masters will join Keroan’s wing. We are leading Elementalist attacks against the Demons. Azurean, Duskers, Dawnris with riders not gifted are assuring cover for the attacks and leading distractive strikes.”

He did not linger behind, appearing away, leaving Effilin and the three others to look at each other.

“He changed,” said Nerthor... “He is... sharper... stronger too...”

Lienhor shrugged.

“We have better thing to do than ponder over Kobalt.”

That said, he and his Female Dewat, Axhiea, popped away.

Effilin glanced at Edevia and Nerthor that were looking at the fight going on around them. They all shared a look and disappeared.

[illegible]

Kobalt tried not to mull over the return of the four Masters. He immediately assessed the situation. They had one of the Demons nearly done with and the second one heavily harmed. But even if they



managed to strike it hard enough to make it fall, they would still need to destroy the stone that anchored them in this plane of existence.

They hadn't stayed unscathed either.

They had lost a third of the riders. Three more had been killed, spurring the Dragons into a frenzied fighting rage every time. The rest had had to leave, struck by various attacks more or less grave and Kobalt dreaded getting the casualty toll. Chasing those thoughts, he focused on the battle. The Vampires had subdued one Demon in a net of Shadows and were hitting him with strange devices that flew around, piercing him, slashing through his flesh. They were using their own magic and blades that had to have been enchanted before hand or coated. They were also fighting along the Goblins against a second one. A special unit of Vampire protected their mages while Goblin soldier crawled over the Demons' body, having managed to make him fall and subdue him. The wizards had heavily burnt one, the Elemental, helped by wizards were taking care of the sixth one.

A small explosion was heard and had Kobalt's head whirled to the right. The right side of the Demon that Vampires and Goblins had been fighting had been blown up, leaving, only a mangled body, thick black and purple goo and liquids flowing from the wounds.

The roar of pure pain and rage that shot in the air chilled Kobalt to his core.

Four Vampires were thrown in the air, flying meters away. That did not deter their companions as they kept on fighting.

Kobalt asked Polath to land next to the wizards to warn them about the anchors.

He stopped next to that scarred one with the fake leg and eye.

"Wizard!"

The man turned his head to him, shielding against a magical ball aimed at him.



“What, elf? Don’t you see we’re busy here?” he snapped.

Kobalt frowned.

“You’re not the only one. I just came to warn you that these Demons are anchored in our plane by stones which are probably situated in their heart. You’ll have to destroy them to kill those things for good.

The wizard cursed loudly and started to shout orders around.

Getting the impression that his presence was not wanted, Kobalt flew to the Goblins and Elementals to tell them this piece of information. He then went to the Vampires.

Refraining from showing the distrust this race inspired him, he walked to a tall male Vampire that looked to be the one in charge.

“Vampire!”

The Immortal whirled in his heels.

“Elemental,” he said with a discrete sneer. “What do you want?”

Kobalt scowled at the tone.

“I assume you are aware you’ll need to destroy the anchoring stone in those demons?”

The black-haired vampire merely nodded.

“Indeed, and we are going to try to get to the first one... Watch and learn, child.”

He raised his hand and immediately Several Vampires jumped on the demon that was strapped to the ground in the Shadow’s net. The beast trashed.

/Let me out, you pathetics, worms/

He tried to banish the shadows, but the four Adepts held their grounds, though they were starting to give signs of weakening.



The Demon unleashed a powerful wave of power, but found it restrained by several other adepts, he called for his peers, roaring for them to come to his help, but they were already busy fighting against their own opponents.

Trashing, the creature, kept yelling and roaring as the Vampire dug arm-long gold needles in his flesh.

A tall skinny female vampire then tapped them all. She took several vials from her coat and uncorked them. With a smirk, she splashed their contents in the area surrounded by the metallic needles. She watched with a smirk as the flesh started to dissolve, a heavy grey smoke coming from the deepening wound.

/Stop! Fools! You will pay for your treachery/ The Demon was writhing in agony as the liquids kept on working their way through his chest with a small hiss.

The Demon was known fighting for his life. Vampires were creatures from the Shadows. Their magic could affect him and they knew all the Darkness' secrets when it came to the Abyss' beings.

With the energy coming from despair, he buckled under the tight net of Shadows keeping him down. Feeling one of the four Adepts holding him down weaken, he doubled his efforts to free himself and make them pay!

They were only Half-blood! They couldn't defeat him! Half of them were still human, this humanity was the thing allowing them to still roam the livings' lands, when they, the true demons, were condemned to eternal Darkness!

That wasn't fair!

He would show them that him and his brethren would no be defeated by Halflings!

Gathering his drained powers and pushed them down the net, focusing on the weakest link.



He felt the undead falter, resist but finally give in as a full blast of Demonic magic struck him, sending him meters away, heavily injured.

Immediately the net started to flicker and he fought harder to free himself. He tried to get the pathetic female standing on him away, knowing what she was looking for and what she was about to do.

He was mere moments from freedom when he felt someone else step in for the fourth part of the Quadrant holding him down.

NO!

NO!

He felt the wretched undead on his chest stand up again, having clawed to him as he fought the binds.

She checked on the golden needles, digging two a bit deeper and watched satisfied as the liquids kept eating at the demon's flesh, finally reaching his heart.

It was a charred looking pulsing organ. It was not beating like human hearts did. Magic was pulsing around it, tendrils shooting through the body at regular intervals.

The Vampire smirked and turned on her side, shouting a name.

Immediately, a burly looking Immortal jumped at her side and started incanting, a chalice in his hand. Waving his hand, weaving shadows together, he made the translucent liquid rise from the chalice, twirled by the shadows.

Then he brought down his hand as if throwing something, a gleeful expression on his face. The shadows and the liquid shot into the wound and on the charred pulsing mass.

This time, it was a primal scream that echoed in the air. Beyond pain, agony or rage, it rang over the battle field. The other Demons turned to their fallen companion but ignored him in their own fight to crush the mortals that had dared to challenge them.



The Demon's heart glowed darkly and started to dissolve. An obsidian carved stone with several runes appeared then started to crack.

It imploded, the stone reduced to mere dust.

The Demon shrieked, arching against the shadow net, and was engulfed in dark flames. The Vampires close to him had barely enough time to run away to avoid being destroyed too, their half demonic side rendering them vulnerable to those flames.

The vampires all let out a loud battle cry before spreading to the other groups fighting.

Kobalt shook himself; he had been standing, shocked still upon watching this feat.

He had not thought Vampires to be that powerful. His Elders had always described them as simple, mindless blood-suckers. They had said that, ages ago, the Immortals had held a lot of power, but that after the races parted, the Vampires had lost most of their knowledge as many if not all their Ancients disappeared during the parting. The Elemental Elders had supposed that the Ancients had not survived the heavy magical backlash.

Apparently they had been wrong...

He shook his head. Now was not the time.

He looked at the Vampire, he now recognized as an Ancient of his race. The Immortal smiled at him, showing his fangs.

"We are not as weak as your race think us to be, little Elemental."

Kobalt nodded slowly, respect showing in his stance.

"I can see that, Vampire."

"Call me Adrien, young one. I never thought I would see humility from your kind after the past millennia..."



Kobalt didn't say anything knowing this to be true. He had come to realize that his race like the Elves and Magis had grown arrogant and complacent over the centuries. He just hoped that people would realize their mistake before it was too late.

"I am going to go back to my companions, Ancient."

Adrien nodded.

"We will help and destroy the anchors. None of you, except the two Athars and perhaps the old badger guarding this school or the Elven prince could manage to do it... However the sun will rise in two hours, we won't be able to stay afterwards. Not even our powers can protect us from the burn of its rays. Only a handful of us might be able to survive it, and even then, it would take us years to heal from such an ordeal."

Kobalt pursed his lips before saluting the Ancient and jumping back on Polath's back, both of them springing up in the air and joining the wings. He took out his communication stone and activated calling for Opheria.

*"Kobalt, what happened?"* Opheria's voice sounded tired and stressed.

*"Opheria, the Vampires are going to destroy the anchoring stones if we can get the Demons down."*

There was a pause.

*"Alright, I'll spread the word to the wings. Are you sure we can trust them?"*

*"I am."*

*"Very well."*

Kobalt ended the communication.

Surveying the scene, he realized for the first time that they might win this battle, if only thanks to their superior numbers.



He saw that the different groups were started to get the upper hand, but the many shells of fallen fighters or maimed bodies that littered the grounds showed that this victory would come to a price.

Two roars covered the noise of the battle fields, and he whirled on his heels, seeing the Demons that Goblins and Vampires had been fighting disappear in Dark Flames.

Jumping on Polath's back, he and his bonded flew to their wings. The next hour was a blur of roar, pained shouts and cries as the allied species slowly got the upper hand. Half an hour before sunrise, only two Demons were still left, one of which was caught in a Shadow net set up by Vampires Shadow Adepts which were being power fed by wizards and even some riders. The Female Vampire and the burly Vampire Kobalt had watched the first time once more went through the steps allowing them to destroy the anchoring stone. The riders and some wizards helped by some Goblins, Vampires and Elementals gifted were keeping the last Demon at bay and were trying to get him down.

The creature was heavily harmed.

It had lost his right arm and only an oozing lump remained in place of his left ones, his torso's right side had disappeared, purplish-black liquid seeping from the wound, some of his entrails sticking out. His right legs was a mangled mass of half regenerated flesh, bones appearing, shreds of broken ones sticking out from the flesh. The left one missed large chunk of flesh and had been obviously broken but fared a bit better. Half of his hellish face seemed to have melted away thanks to the acid the humans had come up with. All his red vines had been cut down thanks to the vampires and he was started to tire, his magical attacks weakening. The Demon kept looking widely around him, looking for help which wouldn't come. He heard his brethren perish and tilted his head back, letting out a scream which echoed far away.

/Be Damned all of you/ he shouted, hatred lacing his words.

He was struck heavily by a blast of combined Vampiric, Elemental and Wizard magics which sent him to the ground, a large hole piercing his chest.



Immediately, Shadows surrounded his body chaining to the blood soaked grounds despite his trashing to escape the Shadow Adepts' grip.

/We will be back, and you shall all perish! You will DIE mortals! And the Demons shall once more roam and rule these lands, we will feast upon your flesh and your children/

A full cauldron of acid was dumped on his face, melting the nose and mouth, keeping him from speaking. He stared with hatred at his enemies, still writhing, trying to escape one way or another or to delay his upcoming doom. None of those that crossed his gaze would be able to forget it and it would haunt their nights for the rest of their lives.

The female Vampire, also called Lorna, tiredly dug her needles and throw her acid, watching it eat away the remaining flesh and uncovering the Demon's heart.

"Go on Max, send this scum back to where it belongs," she said to Adrien's lieutenant in a tired voice.

The Burly Immortal nodded as he raised his arm and incantated in low voice, watching with a vindictive and dark smile as the shadows mixed to the draught he had prepared, made of phoenix tears and blood, unicorn blood willingly given, thestral blood, tears from a virgin maiden, waters from a holy spring, Basilisk venom and blood from an Ancient. Not the easiest ingredients to get, but he had managed, fortunately for all of them.

He and Lorna jumped away as the Demon burst into flames, uttering a last curse as he turned to ashes.

They slowly walked to their leader who was discussing with a young, even by human standard, rider, an Elemental, a goblin and an aged wizard.

Adrien turned to them.

"Well done, Lorna, Maximillien."



They nodded sharply.

*We did not suffer many losses. Only five of us perished tonight, though half of us will be in need of care and rest for the following days or weeks.*

The mind voice of their leader echoed through their head. They understood he didn't want the mortals to learn what losses they had suffered. Let them think what they wanted, in particular if it meant them thinking them unharmed.

*Who went to our Dark Mother tonight, Adrien?* asked Lorna.

*Yvan, Theodric, Johann, Maellis and Valina did not make it.* The mind voice was tinted with regrets at these losses

Maximillien lowered his head, one of them had been a close friend of his, but he had known Theodric often took unnecessary risk while fighting.

*May their spirit rest in piece and be remembered,* quietly whispered Lorna, regretting the death of Valina which had been turned a few days after her. Both of them had been trained together.

Adrien gave a slight nod.

"We will leave now, the sun is about to rise and my people needs rest and some healing."

The wizard nodded, understanding shining in his eyes.

"We will hold a ceremony tomorrow night to mourn those who died fighting tonight. Do you wish to attend?"

Adrien shook his head, barely concealing a wince as the movement made him reopen a wound on his shoulder.

"Death do not hold the same meaning for us, wizard. We will meet again soon. There is much we need to discuss with all those present here." He looked around. "I think the time has come for some truth to be revealed..."



Dumbledore looked at him with piercing eyes.

“Maybe it has... We will hold a meeting in four days an hour after sun set. Bring whoever you feel should be present as long as they are not a threat to us.”

Adrien nodded sharply before fading away, leaving the other races standing on the battle field.

The survivors started to walk around, gathering the dead or what remained of their bodies. It took them all the day to gather, identify and bring the bodies to a mortuary.

Kobalt staggered to the rooms that had been assigned to him in the wings reserved for the riders.

They had lost eight riders, nearly all of them had required some care from a healer and nearly half of them wouldn't be able to fight for days or weeks in order to heal from this battle.

He had been lucky, having only suffered from superficial cuts, burns and many bruises. Opheria had had her left side burnt to the second degree and would need a week of rest before being allowed to fight. Polath had been burnt slightly but nothing dire.

Kobalt slumped on his bed and fell asleep still dressed in his dirty, stained and bloody battle robes.

He woke up groggily to the sound of shouting.

Sitting slowly, his sore muscles screaming in pain, he tried to remember where he was. Memory of what had happened came back to him and he raised his hand to his head. With slow movements, he stood up, surprised to find himself dressed in soft cotton pajamas. A potion vial and a scroll grabbed his attention though he was more interested in flaying those still shouting next door.

*Drink, it should get rid of any soreness or lingering pains you might feel, or so those they called potion masters here say.*

*I'm going back to Horevald, Celen will arrive shortly.*



## *Reald*

The young Elemental gulped down the contents of the vial and sighed in relief as soreness seemed to leave his body.

Walking to his bags which had been brought to his rooms, he got dressed in casual clothes. He had charged several riders to bring all the other riders bags to the castle before joining them to battle. That done, he walked out and into the next room to find three of the four formers masters arguing loudly among themselves, Lienhor being absent from the rooms.

The four of them, except for the Horse master had fought along side with the other riders, but without their bond to their dragons and with their abilities still lowered, they had not been able to do much and had so got out of the battle relatively unscathed.

Kobalt felt himself grow angry at his former masters. They were a lot of resting riders in the wing, some of whom in real need of rest and they loudly bickered like mere younglings.

“What in Solyen name do you think you are doing?”

His icy cold voice carried across the room and silenced them for a few seconds, surely out of the shock at having a youth speak to them that way.

Kobalt waved his hand, raising a silencing ward around them.

“So, care to explain why I was woken up because you felt the need to shout like children without having the foresight to raise a silencing ward to allow those injured to have their rest?”

Effilin looked at him.

“Why are we still bearing the Elders’ punishment, youngling? We fought with you two days ago, we helped the humans and even those weak blood-suckers, but only Lienhor’s sentence was ended.”

Kobalt shook his head.



“Do you hear yourself, Master Effilin. You still haven’t understood your mistake. You refuse to see what the Dragons want you to...”

“Bust we helped!” said Edevia looking cheated.

Kobalt sighed.

“And that’s why your Dragons came to you. But you need to understand.

“Understand what, in Solyen’s name!” shouted the Fighting master, obviously fed up.

Kobalt shook his head.

“If you can’t see it, then it is not my place to tell you... Now I will ask you to lower your voices or to go outside. There are many injured in the castle, many of them distressed by what happened. There are children who lost a parent and do not need to witness you shout at each other.”

The young Elemental did not wait for them to answer him and left the wing assigned to the riders before he said something he would come to regret.

He reached the Great Hall and was met with the noise coming from hundreds of chattering children and adults. It was apparently lunch time.

Come to think of it, he was definitively hungry.

Looking around, he spotted Opheria and some riders eating at a table and walked to join them, noting that Prince Celen was seated at the table on the stage.

He slumped into the chair next to Opheria.

The young Magis looked a little better, though he could see her torso and her left arm were still bandaged.

“How are you, Ophy?”



“Better, though still tired. Those potions seemed to work though, I should be able to get rid of those bandages in a day. You look tired though...”

“I was woken up,” said the young Elemental shortly.

Deciding not to pursue this issue, the young woman passed him the plate and they started to eat in silence. A small cough had them turning to see several young humans, about the Athar’s age, standing behind them.

A young woman with brown frizzy hair spoke up.

“Excuse us, but we would like to ask you something, if it isn’t too much of a bother.”

Kobalt shrugged and waved to them to sit down.

He raised an eyebrow as a few sat in the chairs next to him while others remained standing behind them, their stance alert. That wasn’t common behavior... Sweeping the hall with his eyes, he realized that many youths were behaving in a similar way, some of them on alert while others ate.

“What do you want to know?”

The witch that had addressed him looked straight in his eyes, face hard.

“Why wasn’t Harry with you? Why didn’t he come to our aid? I was told he was involved in some kind of mission, but I know my friend, rider; and he wouldn’t have abandon his friends unless he was forced to... So Where. Is. Harry?”

Kobalt did not know what to say. Should he reveal the troubles going on through the Elven World or not? Then what could he say? From the faces of the young wizards and witches around him, they wouldn’t take ‘no’ or ‘secret information’ as an answer. He looked up and spotted the Prince looking at him. His dilemma must have shown in his gaze as Celen rose from his seat, speaking to the Elemental on his right and made his way to their table.



“Rider, answer us, please. We just want to know what happened to our friend.”

Kobalt opened his mouth to answer, but was cut by Celen.

“But maybe, this hall is not the best place to answer this question, Hermione Granger.”

The brown haired young woman turned her head sharply towards the Elven Prince.

“Prince,” her tone was neutral. “Perhaps then you’ll be able to follow us and answer our question.”

Celen nodded.

"I will, just lead the way, Miss Granger."

The group of students simply made their way out of the room, followed by many eyes.

[illegible]

Celen was feeling quite uncomfortable. He remembered the two young humans that had been the Athar's friends, but he didn't remember them being that cold. Apparently, being in a real war-situation had changed them. He shivered at the look the red-head shot him. He had seen Kobalt and Opheria. Both looked weary and tired as well as jaded. It made him feel uneasy and childlike and he didn't like feeling like this.

They walked down several corridors, climbed several set of moving stairs, skipping some trapped steps as he was told. They finally stopped in front of a portrait and Celen watched, surprised, as Hermione paced three times in front of it.

He was then baffled, though he hid it well, upon seeing a door appear out of nowhere.



He was ushered inside and raised his eyebrow at the obviously well protected room. He could feel the many wards set around it. There were several chairs, couches and armchairs placed in a circle, a small table in the middle with some drinks on it.

They all sat down and Celen readied himself to face the inquisition.

Apparently The bushy-haired witch had been chosen as spokesperson to deal with the interrogation.

“We are safe from eavesdroppers now, Prince, so would you mind telling us about Harry?”

Celen looked at the humans sitting in the room. They were all young, even if it was a bit hypocrite of him to say this since he had about the same age...

They were tired and some of them injured or still in shock regarding the happenings of the past days.

He hadn't been present, but from what he had gathered and what he had learnt from Reald, the Elemental masters and some riders, the battle had been gruesome. Reald had seemed a bit shaken and had locked himself in his study, spending his time over dusty manuscripts.

The Prince had arrived a few hours earlier and needed to talk with the wing leaders to get their report.

He decided the truth would be the better way to handle the Athar's friends.

“There was an uprising in my world. Many disagreed with my Mother's decision to end the centuries of separation between both our races. A man responsible for a part of the kingdom raised an army and attacked us. Doing so he drained a whole area, made of several islands, of its magic. There was several strong earthquakes that cause many deaths and destroyed many of the cities, towns and village there. The Isles started sinking.”

Celen paused a little before resuming his explanation as no question came forth.



“A way to prevent the sinking by replenishing the magical nodes under the islands. We used the power of the temples with their heads acting as channel for it, but it wasn’t enough. We had to call on the power of the Dragons. We needed channels strong enough to bear this kind of powers and linked to Dragons.”

“Harry and his friend, Teneb I think, were asked to do it,” stated matter-of-factly the red-haired boy, Ron, if Celen remembered correctly.

The Elven prince nodded.

“They were the ones with the better chances of success and survival.”

The brown-haired witch frowned.

“If there are any chances that they survive such an ordeal,” she said, her frown deepening. “From what little information I could find about channeling while researching ways to fight Voldemort.” She rolled her eyes at the shudder that passed on several of her peers’ faces. “Next to nobody managed to come out of it unscathed. The luckier came out as Squibs and the less lucky ones ended insane or dead, consumed to their core by the magic running through, sometimes even reducing them to mere ashes. How could you even think of doing it and asking them to do it!”

Celen frowned, gritting his teeth. He had agreed to keep an open-mind, but he would be damned by the Nine if he let a puny human female looked down on their magic and rituals when they had millennia to refine their practice.

“I don’t think you can form a clear and unbiased opinion based on whatever remains of the knowledge some humans managed to save of the magics of the Old Ways,” he snapped, “Channeling small energies can be done quite safely, the danger resides with the levels of power Teneb and your friend have been channeling for now, as well as the level of exhaustion they will reach. It has already been three days since they started this ritual.”

“You mean they have not eaten or drunk for three days!” shouted Ron.



Hermione shook her head.

“That’s not possible; nobody can go more than two days without water without heavily suffering from it.”

Celen rolled his eyes.

“They are being sustained by magic, but they will have to go through an excruciating backlash if they survive the channeling.”

There was a small silence.

“So you mean to tell us that you might have sent our only hope at ending our war to get himself killed or become a Squib,” stated a dark-haired young man who had been leaning against the mantel of the fireplace. Celen repressed a shiver at the cold rage emanating from him.

“Zabini...” said a young Asiatic woman, trying to placate him.

“No Cho, that’s our future we’re talking about, and I want to know why they thought they had the right to compromise it?” he replied dryly.

Celen kept looking back and forth, feeling like he had missed something.

“Could somebody explain to me what is so important about the Athar, Harry, I mean?” He raised an eyebrow. “He is extremely powerful, but he is still only one man.”

The one they had called Zabini snorted.

“Yeah, right.”

Hermione shot him a dark look.

“Shut up, Zabini! Hey want nothing to do with us, they made it clear! They don’t need to know this!”

The Slytherin shook his head.



“On the opposite, Granger. They came there and fought with us. Do you think Voldemort will let that go? No, they are in this as deep as us.”

Celen was reluctant to agree, but the human was right. However, the counselors might not see it like this...

“You did not answer me, wizards. Why is he so important to your world?”

Hermione sighed.

“We don’t know everything, but before I tell you anything else, I need an oath that this will not be told in anyway possible to anyone else.”

Celen tightened his lips in distaste.

“Very well, you have my word, witch, that what I, Celen Soryan Ikerstorm-Vyriannight, will be told will not leave this room.”

Hermione nodded, feeling the magic around them binding the Elven Prince.

“Alright, from what we could gather, there is a prophecy surrounding Harry. None of us knows the exact wording, but the idea is that in the end it will come down to Harry and Voldemort.”

Celen pursed his lips.

“I will need to know the exact wording, as well as meet the seer that gave this prophecy if he or she is still alive.”

Ron snorted.

“That’s easy, the fraud is living in her tower, she hasn’t come down for months, claiming that all the death and gloom as well as Seeing the death awaiting us was torture to her inner eye. She doesn’t want to burden us with the knowledge we won’t survive the war”

The Elf gave him a strange look.



“That’s possible. Sensitive Seer can be overloaded by their visions if they are placed in stressful environments...”

Laughter followed his words.

Seeing the peeved look on the elf face, Cho thought it better to explain.

“That woman is a fraud, she barely made a handful of real predictions and love to predict people’s deaths,” she said in an irritated voice clearly not fond of the woman.

“Then why do you give so much credit to a prophecy she made?” asked Celen.

“Because this time, it was real,” retorted Hermione, “Go to the Headmaster, if you want to know more, he was the one to hear the prophecy...”

Celen nodded slowly. This made the situation even more complicated. He had been told by several archivists already that the two Athars had started to fill the requirements of several prophecies that had been recorded by the Elves over the past millenia. He didn’t want to think about the effects of several prophecies intertwining.

“I will... now I must go, I have many things I need to do.”

He stood up and walked for the door. He stiffened as he felt someone grab his arm.

“You did not answer us, Prince. When will Harry be back?” Blaise Zabini’s voice was icy. He was a Slytherin and he wanted to survive that war, which meant making sure that Potter would be able to get a shot at Voldemort. And to do so, the Golden Boy needed to be sane and healthy. They would have no use for a crippled hero.

Celen shook the grip of the young man, annoyed.

“I do not know anymore than you. I left early this morning. It had been two days since they had entered Darkana and we had no word from the priests apart from telling us that the channeling was still going on.



I will be warned as soon as they come out and of their trance.” He looked at the wizards and witches around him. “I will warn you as soon as I will be able to.”

Hermione nodded sharply.

“Do so.” She walked to the door and left, the others following her, talking lowly, discussing what they had just learnt. The dark-haired wizard that had gripped his arm was still eyeing him.

“I don’t trust you, Elf.”

Celen chose not to answer and headed for the door.

“You need Potter’s help. But you won’t come to our aid, unless you have no choice, no matter how much you claim otherwise. We are no better than barbarians to your eyes and I’m not fooled. You’d have ignore our plight had it not involved you.”

Blaise Zabini straightened up and uncrossed his arms. Celen felt the need to defend himself before those accusing eyes.

“You’re wrong wizard, My mother and I want to change things...”

Zabini smirked.

“Spare me the fairytale story, Prince. My family is a small minor branch of the Ciarellis and some of their possessions that weren’t destroyed were passed to us. Some of them date back to millennia ago.” He paused, sending the Elf a pointed glance. “You and I know better. Even now, you don’t tell us everything you will tell at the meeting tomorrow night.”

“I...” Celen felt a slither of worry fill him as he really looked at the young man in front of him.

“Don’t bother, Prince. Just know that I and my friends will watch you.”

That said, the young wizard drew his cloak around him and silently exited the room.



The Elven Prince was unsettled. This wizard... he would become a powerful one... the two friends of the Athar too. He repressed a shudder; this might be why wizards might have been feared. Celen shivered at the thought of what they could do if they put all their resources and mind to it... For the time he really understood the danger that humans could prove to be. He would have to talk to his mother.

[illegible]



## Chapter 33

Valera had made sure Darkana was being watched for any sign that the channeling was over. The Magis sent to the Isles were also informing her of the power levels of the nodes under them, as well as stabilizing the channeled energies to prevent an overload of one node. For the past three days, she and many others had waiting anxiously for words of the Athars.

Meanwhile, she had tried to occupy herself with the many issues she had to deal with, the more important one being the punishment she would have to inflict to Geryan.

She could not leave his treason go unpunished without endangering her authority over the kingdom. But she couldn't be too harsh either since many agreed to his reasons for going against her.

She had already arranged a meeting with him, Cerelias and Kieran, the High Duke of Ynris to discuss their standing. She had read Reald's report and had made her mind. She would try to make the three others see her point of view so that could present a united front to the Councils.

She bit her lip. There was so much at stake now. She hoped Celen was dealing with the situation in the human world as good as possible.

Her eyes strayed to the window, falling on the glowing building. She refused to acknowledge the fact that she had chosen this room out of all the others in this manor because of its view on the riders' temple.

The Athars would be fine.

They had to. She did not want to think of what might happen should they perish. She focused back on the various reports piling on her desk and needing her attention. Checking the hour, she realized, she had a meeting with General Jihar and Hysten, the Elite leader in less than ten minutes.

She just hoped they would be the bearers of good news. Standing up, she tilted her head from sides to sides, trying to ease the tension out of her neck.



She walked out of the room, locking it tightly behind her, and headed for the Strategy room where the two Elves were already waiting for her, discussing over several papers and maps.

They stood up as soon as they spotted her, bowing from the waist.

“Your Majesty,” they said respectfully.

“Sit down, We have much to discuss and it is already late in the afternoon. First of all, give me the reports from Keis.”

They went over the daily report from the troops sent there. The Isles were now stabilized and the rebuilding had started. A collective pyre would be organized for the unfortunate that died in the catastrophe. Valera made a note to warn Celen to come back in order to be present. None of them could afford not to attend this ceremony, no matter the situation.

They weren’t able to discuss much more as a soft tocking was heard.

“Enter,” snapped Valera, annoyed by this interruption as she asked not to be disturbed. A Herald entered, face blank as usual.

“My apologies for this intrusion, Your Majesty. The Priest sent us a message. The Channeling is done.”

Valera was on her feet.

“How are the Athars? Can we go see them?”

The Herald shook his head.

“The Xhan and Xhana were called to their side. They sustained many damages and changes. They told us the next day would be decisive.”

Valera sat down, a crestfallen look on her face.

When the Xhan and Xhana had came out of their temples a day and a half ago without any lasting damages except for extreme exhaustion, some pain and several burns, she had hoped it would be the same for the two Athars.



“Will they live?”

“They can’t say for now.”

“Can we see them?”

“They agreed to six people coming, not one more.”

Valera thought for a little while... Doryan and Ysela were a given. She did not think having Delia see her brother in that state would be a good thing. She would go, Celen too, Djaryle and ... she suddenly had an idea. It would create a real uproar, but that might be the thing to open her people’s eyes.

She turned back to look at the herald, a determined glint in her eyes.

“Send a man to Darkana, tell them we will come by noon. Then send another to Doryan and Ysela, telling them to come here. I want also you to go or send someone trustworthy to the human world and bring the Prince back.”

She took a deep breath.

“Have one of the Athar’s friend come too,” she did not miss the slight widening of the Herald’s eyes, nor the small spark of respect in his eyes. She would have to talk to Kesle, the Prime Herald. The Heralds might be more useful than she thought and make unbiased advisors... She would have to look into this matter.

The Herald bowed deeply then left.

“Majesty, a human... here... are you sure it is wise?” asked Hysten.

“I trust you and Jihar to set up an effective protection system for our guest.”

Hysten nodded slowly, not really convinced of the wisdom of such a decision, an opinion obviously shared by the General if his frown was anything to go by.

Valera sighed.



“The Athar will beneficiate from having a friend close to him and it might be the eye-opener some people might need.”

Jihar shrugged.

“Maybe your Majesty, but excuse my lack of respect when I say I doubt it. This could prove to be extremely dangerous.”

“I trust you both to deal with any threats to the Athars or our guest. Dismissed.”

The two warriors left, talking quietly, starting on their planning.

Valera slumped in her chair draying to the Nine she had made the right decision. For the next ten minutes she rethought all the decisions she made, wondering once more if she had made the right choices, if it wouldn't have been better to ignore everything and have their worlds to carry on as they had always done... She shook her head. No. She had made her choice and would face the consequences.

The door opened and Doryan and Ysela stepped in, tears streaming down Valera's friend's cheeks.

She hugged the female elf that had chosen to come to Horevald with her when she had been sent to the royal city as the bride to be to King Enrys.

“Tell me he is alive; tell me he will live, please Valera.”

The Queen pulled back a little.

“The Xhan and Xhana are at his and the Athar's sides. The next day will decide their fate. We must pray the Nine, Lunaï and Solyen to let them stay with us.”

Ysela nodded, tears in her eyes.

“They must live, Valera. They can't leave us now.”



“They will pull through,” said Valera with more conviction than she felt, but she didn’t want to distress her friend more. “They are strong and their dragons will support them. But you must be strong Ysela. Tomorrow, we are allowed to see them.” *Whatever happened, if this is to see them healing or to retrieve their bodies if they don’t make it.* She steeled herself. She needed to believe in their recovery. *But may Lunai hear me, should they not make it, I will make sure their sacrifice is never forgotten....* “I assume you and Doryan will come. Celen, Djaryle and I will also be there. I had him and one of the Athar’s friends fetched from the human world.”

Their eyes widened for a few seconds.

“Are you sure it is wise, Valera. They are many that might take this opportunity to strike against the humans.”

Valera nodded.

“This will be a first step in closing the rift between our worlds, or so I hope.”

Doryan seemed doubtful but did not voice it. It wasn’t his place to criticize his Queen. However he could help her and he knew how.

“We will house his friend,” he said, surprising his wife and once they can be moved, they can come to our house to finish their healing process.”

Valera raised an eyebrow at him.

“Are you sure?”

Doryan offered her a small strained smile.

“Yes, I owe this to the Athar. Housing his friend is the least we can do.”

Valera showed her agreement, smiling gratefully at him.

“Thank you, I will tell Jihar and Hysten to talk to you regarding our guest’s security.”



Ysela nodded.

“When do we leave?”

“We are expected at noon. I will send an Herald for you then. But be prepared for some changes, nobody can come out of such ordeals the same.”

Ysela nodded.

“I know, thank you Valera.”

The Queen smiled a little.

"You would do the same for me, Ysela. How is Delia?"

The female elf smiled faintly.

“Asking about her brother and his friend, or trying to dress the cat with her dolls’ clothes...”

The three elves talked quietly for some time, trying to forget what had happened, what would happen tomorrow for an hour, there was no war, no decision to make, just friends talking.

Meanwhile a rider galloped to Darkana while a Dragon carrying his rider and an Herald left for the human world, disappearing from the darkening sky.

[illegible]

Celen had spent the day with Kobalt, Opheria and the other wing leaders and Seconds, going over the battle, their losses as well as planning what to do. It was late in the afternoon when Celen left to meet with the human leading this school, well, better say the resistance. He needed to clear this prophecy thing.

As he climbed the staircases, following this creature the humans called house-elf, he wished he had a priest with him or a Seer. He knew little about prophecies, only that they needed to be deciphered



with extreme caution for they often had hidden meanings under hidden meanings. Celen came out of his thoughts as they stopped in front of a statue.

“Gummy bears,” squeaked the small being, his ears flapping on his head’s sides. The gargoyle stepped aside, revealing the entrance to the wizard’s office.

A few moments later, he knocked on the heavy door, waiting to be allowed inside.

“Enter, Prince Celen,”

A bit unnerved at having the man know he had been standing before his door, Celen stepped inside. Taking in his surroundings, his eyes widened a little. Strange spinning and ticking trinkets were spread around the room, animated portraits, something which had really unsettled the elf, were hanging on the walls, most of their occupants sleeping soundly. Reports, maps, papers were stocked on every available surface. A giant map was hanging on the wall, hundreds of colored dots blipping and moving across it.

Celen spotted the aged human sitting at a desk, looking in a carved basin filled with a silvery liquid.

The old man looked up, drawing a final strand from his temple to the bowl before standing up and putting it back to its hiding place.

“Good evening to you, Prince. I trust you are well?”

Celen nodded, his eyes still riveted to the spot in the wall behind which the Pensieve had been hidden.

“Yes, thank you,” he answered distractedly, “what was that bowl, if you don’t mind me asking?”

Dumbledore smiled benignantly at him.

“We call this device a Pensieve, Prince. It allows us to duplicate and store some of our memories and review them whenever we want. But



I don't think you came here to discuss our artifacts, did you?" He sent him a piercing look.

Celen sat down silently.

"Indeed, I did not. I wanted to discuss a prophecy I learnt of today, wizard."

He face of the aged human closed of immediately as he said this.

"What of it?"

Celen was not about to be intimidated by a human, even if it was an extremely powerful one.

"I want to know its exact wording, wizard."

The Headmaster crossed his hands.

"And why should I? This is highly sensitive knowledge as I'm sure you know..."

Celen gritted his teeth.

"The Athar..."

"Harry," cut Dumbledore sharply.

Celen nodded.

"Harry and Teneb might be involved in one or two prophecies that have been guarded for millennia. Our Seers are still studying them in depth as well as analyzing how they overlap. This is the reason I need to know the wording of your own prophecy."

The Headmaster stared piercingly at him.

"Well..." he didn't have the time to go any further as a shrill whistle came out of a strange spinning gold device.



Dumbledore was immediately on his feet and waved his stick toward a round glass ball filled with a golden misty fog that immediately started to glow.

“The wards near the Pitch were breached. Three teams must report in the hall. Have the students and a team set up the castle defenses.”

The Headmaster looked at the Elven Prince.

“Forgive me for asking this, Prince, but do you require protection or do you wish to come with us?”

Celen’s face darkened in anger. How dare he ask such a question? He was no coward.

“I will come.”

Dumbledore nodded having expected nothing else.

“Very well, I will ask you to ring to people to guard you.” He raised his hand, forestalling any protest the young Elf might have. “I know you are more than able to protect yourself, young man, but I don’t want to take risk. The situation is difficult enough.”

He waved his wand around, casting several charms as he motioned Celen to follow him out of his office.

The Prince had to suppress a startled jump as the gargoyle-like statue moved back in place, sealing the entry to the man’s rooms.

They hurried along several empty corridors, going through walls or secret passages and reaching the hall in a minute. About sixty people, heavily armed were gathered in the entrance hall.

“Albus! The students are all accounted for and defense teams and wards have been set up to protect the Houses and the Infirmary.”

Dumbledore nodded.

“Good, badger battle formation. Four scouts first, full shields; don’t move until I say so.”



They silently made their way out of the protection of the castle walls. Celen was on edge, magic gathered in his hand. It was then a relief to see a dragon waiting on the Pitch with a rider and what looked like an herald standing at its sides.

“Prince, do you know them?” said Dumbledore, slightly more relaxed in his demeanor.

The Elf narrowed his eyes at the two figures, his face lightening as he recognized the rider as a Master Assistant to Sarwin.

“Yes, I will vouch for them, they probably bring news from my world,” he said, walking towards them while Dumbledore dismissed most of the wizards save a few, asking them to follow him.

Celen saluted the herald and the rider before enquiring as to the reason of their presence.

The herald bowed his head.

“Your mother sent us, my Prince,” said the Herald, his keen blue eyes sweeping the grounds, not missing the mortals stopping a few meters away.

Celen was immediately filled with worry.

“Is there something wrong? Has she fallen ill?”

The herald shook his head.

“No my Prince, the Queen is well. She however sent me to warn you that the Channeling was done.”

Relief broke on Celen’s face.

“Has there been word of the Athar’s condition?”

“The next twenty-four hours will determine their fate. The priests allowed six people to visit them tomorrow. Your mother wishes you to be present for this and for the pyre and the commemoration that will follow.”



Celen paled, not paying attention to the last part.

"I will come at once; I shall be ready in thirty minutes."

The Herald nodded respectfully.

"The Queen wished that a friend of the Athar came with you. She thinks it might help his recovery."

Dumbledore stepped in, frowning.

"What do you mean by this?"

Celen shot him an annoyed look, wanting to go, pack his belongings and leave for his mother's side.

"I'll leave the herald explain," he said, paused thinking about who he would take with him. The red was a possibility, but he discarded it, he was needed here and he wouldn't be able to learn all that was needed to behave in the Elven world. He didn't want to take an adult with him, they would not heed his advice and want to do things their way. He thought a bit more before making his choice. He would take the brown haired witch that was one of the closest friends to the Athar. Sure, she had behaved rashly upon the Athar's return, but since then she had got back to a real level-headed behavior. Moreover, she had enough memory to remember all she would need to do in order to come with him. "I will take Hermione Granger with me. Have her meet me in the hall in half an hour."

He didn't leave them time to contest his decision and quickly headed back to the castle and his rooms.

He hurried to his rooms and packed his belongings with a few waves of his hands, except for some things that couldn't be handled with magic.

That done, he called one of those strange little creatures to take his bags to the hall before going to the riders' rooms.



He knew he would find the leaders there as they spent most of their time locked up there, planning on what to do next, using their dragons as mean to communicate with Demenor who had stayed at Horevald.

“Kobalt?” he asked not spotting the Elemental and his companion at their usual spot by the fire.

“Your Majesty?”

Celen whirled on his heel to see the young Second standing in a doorway behind him.

“Are you and the other wing leaders all here?”

The other nodded, motioning him to enter.

“We were discussing the shifts of the different teams,” offered Kobalt, gesturing to a chair next to Opheria.

“Thank you Kobalt, but I will be brief. The Channeling is done, but the Athars haven’t woken up. I’m leaving for Darkana immediately with a human to see to their recovery.”

Everyone looked at him sharply as he said that.

“A... human, my Prince?” enquired Sindhar. “Are you sure it is wise?”

Celen tightened his lips in a thin line.

“We think it might help Athar Harry in his recovery... I will leave Kobalt in charge regarding our involvement in the human conflicts, with the four Elemental masters and all of you helping him. Should an issue arise, I’ll leave my stone open at all time. Do not hesitate to call.”

He looked around.

“Any question?”

Sindhar looked at the others before speaking up.

“Will you attend the meeting with the humans in two days?”



Celen nodded.

"I will. Hopefully the Athars will have recovered enough to come with me. Should a problem arise, I'll send Prince Reald to stand for me."

The riders nodded and bowed as the Elf Prince left the room quickly, heading straight for the hall. Given the efficiency of the small creatures that saw to the place's intendance, the human should be waiting for him in the hall with her bags.

Indeed, he spotted the brown-haired witch standing in the entrance, scowling. The young Elf had barely the time to realize that it might have been wiser to warn her before sending the creatures after her that she was walking toward him, a deep frown on her face.

"What is the meaning of this, Prince!" she snapped, crossing her arms. "I have better thing to do than standing dumbly in this hall, waiting for you to show up! In particular when I have absolutely no idea why! The house elves you sent interrupted the brewing of much needed potions!"

Celen sighed; maybe choosing her had not been that much of a great idea.

"Please, will you at least let me speak?"

She nodded sharply, arms crossed over her chest, scowling.

"I received some news earlier regarding some common friends and am going back to my world in a few minutes. My mother suggested bringing a guest and you seemed the best choice."

Hermione's scowl had vanished as she understood the veiled words of the prince.

"What news of them do you have?"

"Very little, they are still out of reach. However we are allowed to see them tomorrow."



Apparently having come to a decision, Hermione dug in one of her bags and took out a piece of fresh parchment and a muggle pen. She ripped it in three pieces and scribbled a few lines on each, before folding them quickly in a paper plane and two paper cranes, taking her wand she muttered a few protection charms and an animated one before blowing on them sending the three origami flying out of the hall.

Celen eyed this display of magic a little surprised. The things the humans could come up with. Those origami looked fun though...

Shaking his head and going back to the matters at hand, he saw that the witch was walking out, her bags having disappeared.

She shot him an annoyed look.

"Are you coming?"

Celen gave up trying to understand the witch and just waved to his bags waiting for him and headed to the arena like place with them floating behind him.

The rider and the herald were still waiting there, Dumbledore, a goblin, Mr Delacour and Remus standing next to them, talking quietly with the herald.

The Headmaster smiled tightly, eyes grave as he took in one of his most brilliant students.

"You are going then Miss Granger... I need not to remind you of the dangers you will probably face there."

Hermione nodded.

"No, Headmaster, but Harry will need someone to be here..."

The old wizard sighed.

"Indeed, but be careful." He shot a look that said all to Celen. "I don't trust this world with you... but I expect to hear from you as soon as possible. Safe journey to you, child."



The young witch was a bit puzzled but shrugged it off. She bowed her head to the two Elves as well as to the dragon, a gesture that seemed to surprise the creature.

Celen handed his bags to the rider who stuck them to his dragon's back while the young woman talked quietly with Lupin.

"Miss Granger?" he asked, getting a bit impatient; he wanted to go back and see his friend...

She shot him a cold look before talking a little more with the sable haired man with amber eyes which had always made Celen uneasy. She pushed several strands of her hair that had escaped her messy bun thanks to the strong wind out of her face. She walked to him, chin raised.

"I'm ready whenever you are, Prince."

He hid a smile at the slight challenge in her voice. He nodded to the rider who walked to the young woman.

"I'll give you a hand, you will need to sit between those two scales," he pointed to two sharp looking ones, "Don't worry, Reath use his magic to protect us."

Hermione turned to the head of the magical creature.

"Thank you then, Reath."

You are welcomed, child.

She placed her knee in the folded hand of the rider as he gave her a push upwards. With ease, she settled herself where he had told her to and watch with interest as Celen, the herald and the rider all jumped, probably using their magic to help them sit on the dragon's back.

Dumbledore took a step forward.

"I will hold you responsible of Miss Granger's security, Prince Celen."



The young prince nodded, understanding that should any harm come to the witch he would be the one who would have to answer the old wizard.

“With that, I wish you a safe journey.”

Dumbledore watched as the dragon sprang in the air and disappeared from the Hogwarts' sky and hoped all would go well.

[illegible]

Hermione tightened her grip convulsively as she felt the muscles of the mighty beast work, the winds billowing around her.

“Brace yourself, we are going to jump to Horevald.”

She did not have time to ask him what he meant when she felt herself dissolve into whiteness. She was sliding along with magical currents after what felt like hours or mere seconds, she felt herself become whole once more and stared at the lands displayed under them.

It was green... nature seemed to be present everywhere even in the city under them.

"This is Horevald, we will fly to Darkana so I can get you ready."

Had they been on the ground, Hermione would have hex the patronizing out of his voice.

"I am perfectly able to defend myself," she retorted.

"I don't doubt it, Miss Granger, but I want to explain to you how you will be expected to behave."

“If...” Hermione was interrupted by the prince.

“Do not take offense of this, but you are the first human to come to this world, the Athar excepted. But you won’t have the protection his status gives him. You will be watched, most likely attacked or insulted; you need to know how and when you will be able to ask



retribution. You will have the status of ambassador but that won't protect you much.

He rummaged in one of the bags on the left flank of the dragon and took out a thin book.

“Read this, it is a sum up of the main point of our laws and traditions. There are charms on them to make it easier for you to remember them. We should arrive at Darkana in half an hour.”

But Hermione was no longer listening to him, completely absorbed in her reading, jumping at the opportunity to learn more about those races that had been long though extinct.

She was startled out of the book as the dragon dove and got ready to land.

Quickly, she flipped through the remaining pages, absorbing the finer point of eating desserts while at the Queen table before closing the book.

She would show them what humans were made of. Raising her chin, she braced herself for the landing, but was surprise at its smoothness. The rider jumped down immediately followed by the Herald and the Prince who offered her his hand to help her down.

Spotting several onlookers coming out of the manor next to which they had landed, she suddenly felt self-conscious. She was wearing potion brewing clothes, having been bodily dragged from the dungeons by the house-elves and left no time to change. On the other hand, this outfit had many protective charms woven in it. Clearing her mind, she accepted Celen's help and let herself slide down the Dragon's flank.

“Thank you Reath and rider?...”

“Jalior”

“Rider Jalior, then.” She looked at Celen. “Shall we go, Prince?”



Celen shot her a wry smirk as he offered his arm, asking the herald to get servant to bring his bags to his rooms.

“Come along, Lady Hermione, I will bring you to my mother.” He saw her eyebrows shot up but thankfully she did not comment his use of the title. He couldn’t use the simple Miss used in the human world, not if he wanted his people to treat her with the minimum of respect.

They headed straight for the manor, not stopping as servants opened the doors for them, most of them gawking blatantly at the Prince’s escort.

They finally reached a small room. Tocking softly, Celen opened the door, motioning to Hermione to enter before following her and closing the door behind.

Queen Valera, Doryan, Demenor, Hysten and Jihar were sitting around a small table with a map spread on it. Piles of paper were lying around, as well as glasses half filled with water, a basket of fruits, several books and rolls of parchment.

Valera stood up and nodded to Hermione, a tired smile on her face.

“Welcome to our land, young witch. I hope Lunai and Solyen will smile upon your stay.”

Hermione bowed a little, enough to show some respect, but not too much as to signify she wasn’t one of the Queen subjects.

“As I do, your majesty. Thank you for allowing one of us to see to our friend. He has been missed.”

The queen gestured to the two youths to sit.

“General Jihar, commander of the army, Elite Prime Hysten, leader of the Elite guards, Doryan my advisor and Demenor, the current rider’s leader.”

“Hermione Granger, friend of the Athar, supervisor of the Junior Order of the Phoenix, leader of Team Silver, student of Hogwarts,” said Hermione nodding politely at the men watching her with piercing



stares. "Your son told me that Harry and his friend had been part of a channeling ritual. Do you any news concerning their current state of health?"

Valera shook her head.

"No, I don't know much more than what Celen must have told you. The Channeling was a success and the Isles are safe. Both Athars were taken into the Hearler houses to be healed, and there hasn't been news of them since then. Six of us will be allowed to see them tomorrow at noon. I must warn you that your friend will have changed. Do not expect to get back the man you once knew."

Hermione rolled her eyes.

"I read enough about rituals to know this, your Majesty."

Valera nodded.

"Very well, you will shown to your rooms, they should be ready by now."

Hermione was about to stand up when she felt something come her way. She didn't think. Waving her wand quickly and muttering the words, she cast a strong shield around her and sent back a stunner and a disarming curse straight from where the curses had come.

As no more spell seemed to come, she straightened from the fighting she had automatically assumed and swept the room, eyes blazing with restrained anger.

Jihar gave her an appraising look, his wand coming down.

"Well, it doesn't seem our work will be that difficult."

Hermione took a deep breath.

"General, I'm a hairbreadth from cursing you, so I expect you have a good reason for this attack."

Hysten answered her.



“The Queen asked us to take care of your security, my Lady. We needed to have an idea of your skills... and there was no better way than a surprise attack. What about blades.”

Hermione gritted her teeth. She could understand but that did not mean she liked it.

“I have basic training with knife and a dagger. There was no time to learn more than basics.”

The blond man nodded.

“You’re skilled enough with your magic that it shouldn’t be a problem... Put this on and never take it off. A simple press on the central stone will warn us immediately, the others will act as a locator should the main one fail.”

Hermione eyed the pendant suspiciously. It was a thin golden chain holding a phoenix in flight, with a large ruby in the body, small amber beads used for the eyes and stuck in the gold to form the tail.

She put it on, hiding it under her shirt then stood up as a light tocking was heard.

The doors opened to let a servant enter. The woman bowed to the Queen then waited for her orders.

“Zalenia will attend to you and show you to your room, Lady Hermione. I will see you at dinner.”

Hermione bowed and nodded with a smile at the female in the doorway who was eyeing her with a cool look.

“Lady Hermione,” she said bowing slowly, if not a little reluctantly. “If you would follow me.”

She walked out of the doorway and on the right, Hermione following, her eyes taking in the simple yet elegant elven architecture, the paintings, statues, tapestries, chandeliers lighting the corridors as heavy curtains closed the windows.



They finally reached a set of oak doors that the servant opened with a small silver key allowing Hermione in a large suite of rooms.

"I will leave you to settle yourself, my lady. Should you require anything, use the bell to call me. I will come in an hour for dinner. Do you need anything?"

Hermione thought for a few minutes.

"Will the dinner require formal wear?"

The servant looked at her clothes.

"You will find some clothes in the closet that should fit you for dinner."

"Then that will be all, thank you Zalenia."

The servant bowed sharply and left, closing the door behind her.

Taking out the bags from her pockets, she restored them to their normal sizes and started to empty them. Once that was done, she went to the bathroom to freshen herself, they peered through the different closets before settling on some beige pants and a green embroidered long sleeved tunic, a thin golden belt hanging on her hips. Tying her hair in a strict bun, she adjusted her wand holster to her right forearm. That done, she read the book the Prince had given her to make sure she did not make a fool out of herself.

The dinner was a stilted affair. Hermione was extremely conscious of all the eyes on her, watching her every moves. As soon as it was possible, she excused herself and went back to her rooms where she spent a few hours working over new spells and some Arithmancy equations they were toying with to help the crafting of some portable shields: powerful shields which would be stored in a stone or a ball and activated at will. They were getting somewhere having made a breakthrough recently. They just had a few more equations to solve.

She went to sleep around one in the morning if her watch was to be trusted. The next morning, she asked her breakfast to be brought to her room as she kept on working on her equations, pouring over



several books, cross-referencing them to try to find a clue on what could be missing or what could be wrong.

By noon, she had weeded two minor errors from the equations but couldn't see how to combine them.

A light tocking was heard.

"Lady Hermione?"

She looked up, pushing her hair out of her face.

"Yes?"

"Sorry, to disturb you, my Lady, but the Queen asked for you. They are about to leave for the temple."

Hermione immediately sprang to her feet and put on a warm coat and a wool cloak, having put on a pair of pants and tunic like the day before.

She followed Zalenia to the entrance hall only to see all the others were already ready and waiting for her.

Bowing slightly to the Queen, she looked distrustfully at the horse she was presented.

"I fear I never learnt how to ride, your Majesty."

"You will ride with me then," said the Queen, offering the young witch an hand and pulling her up behind her.

"Hold on tight, child."

That said she spurred her mare forwards and towards Darkana, the others and their escort following.

They reached the temple premises and dismounted.

Hermione would not be able to remember a lot of what occurred, the one thing she would never forget was entering this completely white room which hummed with magic.



The first thing she saw was Harry, on his back, floating in a large see-through box filled with a translucent liquid. He was dressed in a white, large robe, his shoulder-long hair free and floating around his face. A circlet was placed around his head, a diamond in the middle. Hermione noticed his white streaks had turned even whiter than before and that silver highlights had appeared in his hair. The strange mark on his temple was pulsing, Hermione could nearly swear she could see the two spirals move by themselves.

They looked dead, both them.

She staggered on her feet, and only the arm of Celen kept her standing.

“Are-Are they ... “

“They are kept in stasis, young witch.”

She turned and saw the most awesome couple she had ever seen. A man, with purple hair, quite tall, escorted by a rather petite elf woman with plain brown hair that reached her waist. Both were dressed in navy blue robes with a light blue hem, a pendant shining brightly on her chest. But despite their common appearance Hermione could barely stop herself from kneeling before them. Recognizing the pendants and thus their bearers, she bowed, still not really understanding the reason of the awe she felt towards them.

“L-...”

The woman raised her hand.

“We are the Xhan and Xhana, representatives of Solyen and Lunai on these lands.”

“You magic...” breathed Hermione.

“It is only the power the gods decide to give us.”

Hermione frowned.



“Then why this!” she pointed to her friend lying, apparently lifeless in the water. “Why didn’t you step in? Why let them risk their life when you could have acted in their place?”

The woman smiled, and Hermione could have sworn she saw something flash behind her eyes.

“It is not as simple as this, Miss Granger of Hogwarts. We are bound by our rules and the laws of our gods.”

“What kind of rules allow you to let others die in your place!”

Cya walked to her and placed her hands on each cheek.

“They are not dead, child. They knew the risks and they chose. Who would we have been to deny them their choice? We helped, we are now healing them. We know they will survive and come out stronger from this trial than before.”

Hermione frowned.

“Is that why you let them do this? So that they grew even more powerful?”

“This is what our gods told us to do. They will have a task to fulfill and this was but a step towards this goal.”

“What are you talking about?” asked the young witch, lost by all of this, by this world she barely understood.

“About an event foretold millennia ago when the Ancient Ones still lived and thrived.”

Cya smiled.

“Don’t worry, they will pull through, and your presence will help them.”

Hermione felt a warmth go through her and felt tears go down her cheeks at the gentleness she felt at that moment. Suddenly she didn’t see her friend in this box, he was standing at the top of an hill, dressed in the crimson robes he had once worn at Hogwarts, a thin



circlet holding a blood red stone surrounding his forehead. Eight others were standing behind him, the elf, Teneb was at his right, all of them bearing a circlet. Dragons were flying above them, a dark fog surrounding them, only held at bay by the light coming from the nine figures. Harry was not looking that different but wasn't the same at the same time. His green eyes were now swirling blue and silver, his mark was the same, but seemed much more defined, he was slightly taller, his features a little more defined and more importantly his scar was gone.

She blinked, but all she could see was her friend lying in this box.

She shook her head, trying to dispel this picture. It was just a trick of her mind.

"You saw something, didn't you?" asked the silent elf girl that had come with them. Djaryle if she remembered well.

Hermione shook his head.

"I do not believe in Divination and have absolutely no gift for it..."

"Maybe," said Luan, his blue eyes piercing through her, "but the Gods might have wanted to show you a glimpse of what was to come. What did you see?"

Hermione shook his head.

"It was nothing, just a trick of my mind."

Luan smiled benignantly.

"Maybe, maybe not, leave me judge of it, will you?"

Hermione shrugged, her eyes set on her friend's face.

"If you say so... They were standing on an hill."

"Who?"

"Harry, Teneb and seven others... there were strange ones, I don't think all of them were humans or elves. But they all wore this circlet



with a large stone embedded in it. Harry's was a large ruby. They were surrounded by a black fog, but keeping it at bay by the light they emitted. Harry was a bit different, his eyes were silver and blue... and he... just seemed different somehow."

Hermione shook herself from the slight daze recounting this had induced.

"But that's nothing... isn't it?"

Luan looked at the two youths.

"The Nine may rise again, but it is only a possibility." He smiled good-naturedly at Hermione. "Think of the future as a tree, every leaf is a possible outcome, it will be the choices of all those involved which will determine which leaf will come to be."

"But I can't See!"

Cya smiled.

"No, but the Gods wanted you to see this, just accepted this and keep it in mind."

Hermione nodded slowly.

"How can I help Harry?" she said unable to take her eyes away from him.

Luan put his hand on her shoulder.

"Stay close to him. You can stay here until he wakes up; all of you are welcomed to do so. We can ask people to bring your belongings."

Hermione only needed a few seconds to decide.

"I'll stay, but I'd rather go fetch my bags myself."

The Xhan and Xhana agreed. In the end, Ylesa, Celen, Djaryle and Hermione asked to stay, Valera and Doryan couldn't afford to stay.



The days passed, a week, Hermione stayed in the Healer house, working at a table the priest had lent her. Celen had had to leave several times. He went to ceremony to honor those who died in the rebellion and during the catastrophe in the Isles; however he sent Reald to the meeting in the human world, feeling his mother's brother in law would be a more appropriate representative.

It was by the end of this first week that Teneb woke up.

[illegible]

Hermione had been finishing a long string of calculus and was finally getting somewhere. She looked up and screamed.

Teneb was struggling, flinging his legs and arms around. Several priests rushed in the room and levitated him out of the fluid and laid him on a bed they had readied on one side of the room.

Hermione watched quietly as they stabilized him.

He had also changed; she could see it even if she hadn't known him for long. They took the circlet away and started what would be a long series of healing charm. An hour later, they stopped.

By then Ysela, Celan and Djaryle were present.

Teneb's mother was wringing her hands, looking at her son laying motionless on the bed.

“How is he?”

A man, a Deiser as Hermione had learnt they were called, smiled tightly at her.

“He will be fine. His magical levels are simply depleted, he should be awake tomorrow.”

Ysela sagged in relief, held upright by Djaryle.

“Thanks Lunai for this blessing.”



She lovingly caressed her son's head before hurrying outside, probably to warn her husband.

Hermione turned to the box holding her friend. She hoped it wouldn't be much longer for her friend.

The next day saw, everyone waited with bated breath for Teneb to wake up. It wasn't until late in the afternoon that he stirred and opened his eyes.

Hermione had to stifle a gasp upon seeing the silver ring circling the pupils. She stayed back as Ysela embraced her son, Doryan following quickly.

Hermione thought it better to leave. It was a private and she felt like an intruder. She went outside, tightening the thick wool cloak she had fetched from her rooms around her frame. She walked for a long time, enjoying the quietness around her. However that peace was short lived. She felt more than heard or saw the curse head for her head.

Diving to the ground, she had her wand out as she rolled and landed to her feet.

Spinning on her heels, she tried to spot her attackers, waving her wand casting a strong shield as well as a basic scanning charm over the nearby area.

It gave her three magical signatures hidden among the trees. Three arrows whistled, followed by several curses which she managed to duck, all the while pressing the stone in the pendant the general had given her. A beam of purple light passed through her shield and hit her left arm and she gritted her teeth as she felt the bone break. Casting a stronger shield, she took out a small vial from her belt's pocket. Downing its contents, she felt her arm heal. Once she was sure her arm was functional, she concentrated and a few seconds later, a golden sphinx was standing in her place, lion tail twitching in annoyance. Leaping forwards, she ducked the curses and set on getting rid of her attackers.

Along with most of the inner core of the junior Order had been trained in Animagus transformation. It had been months of rigorous training



before she had been able to achieve the transformation, helped by several transfiguration masters. A curse came close and felt a slight burn. Angered, she pounced toward the tree from which the curse had come. The sphinx might be half human, but it was still a creature with animalistic reactions. She could feel the creature was irate and set on killing now that it had been hurt and coming to think of it she wasn't that opposed to it. With a few jumps, using the powerful lion paws to go up the tree, before finally standing on a thick branch, growling slightly at the orange haired idiot who had tried to harm her.

She growled lowly and pounced. Both the man and her fell to the ground though she landed smoothly on her paws, a quick stride and she was above the puny man who had dared hurt her, raising her paw she was about to deliver a blow that would surely killed her enemy when she heard galloping. These few seconds of distraction were nearly fatal. She barely spotted the nearly silent whoosh of the blade meant for her heart and she jumped aside. The dagger cut in her right flank and she roared, bringing her paw down and hitting his hand, claws out, tearing the skin, blood spurting, and the bones breaking under the force of the blow.

“STOP!”

Hysten was gazing at the scene before him. A young Magis was lying on the ground, a huge golden half-feline, half-human snarling above him. The Magis was cradling his right hand. The creature growled threateningly at him and Hysten's eyes widened as he spotted the pendant he had given the human tied around the creature's neck.

Wordlessly, he motioned to some of the men that had come with him to check the area while he slowly made his way towards the obvious predator.

“Lady Hermione?” he asked tentatively, fearing an attack.

It was then a shock to see the feline turned into the young human female that had accompany the Prince. Blinking, he decided not to ponder too much on this. He knew that humans and his people had developed different kinds of magic, but it was the first time he got to see it by himself. There had been legends of people able to turn themselves into animals, but nobody had had this skill for centuries...



He wondered if he could learn to do it... He went back to the matter at hand.

She was standing, holding her right side. With a wave of her wand, the Magis was bound and gagged. She pulled her tunic up and looked at the rather deep cut on her side.

Hysten was about to offer his help but before he could, she had taken a small vial from a belt and downed it, grimacing.

Hysten approached her.

“Do you need me to heal this, my Lady?”

She pursed her lips.

“No, thank you, this potion shall take care of this cut. But I would like explanations regarding this attack.”

Hysten gritted his teeth. He knew why she had been attacked. The identity of the Magis was a dead give away. However, the fact that Garth's brother had managed to come this close to the Athars and Darkana was worrisome. He was going to have to find out how he managed this feat.

“He is the brother of a former Daryn who was denied rider's status then judged and condemned to exile for his crime against your friend. His brother probably wanted to avenge him.”

Hermione tightened her cloak to her body.

“Very well, I will leave you then. There were two more people hidden in the trees. Thanks to you and your men for coming to my help.”

“I did my duty, Lady,” replied Hysten. “Peliam and Nadeis will escort you back to the manor.” His tone left no place for discussion.

Hermione didn't answer, just nodded and headed back to the castle, aware of the two guards walking by her side. She sighed but kept on walking. She hated feeling babysitted.



She thanked the two guards for their help as she reached the main doors. Not waiting for their answer, she made her way back to the Healer house. She discreetly went to her table next to Harry's stasis box and started on her work again.

She immersed herself in her work and did not notice as everyone left. It was way past dinner time when a soft cough startled her from her translation of a dusty manuscript dealing with runes and the various design used as well as the various components of runes. Looking up she saw Zalenia standing in the doorway, holding a tray with a light dinner on it. She curtsied briefly and placed the food on a small table.

"Oh... I'm sorry Zalenia. Thank you very much. I won't require anything, thank you. Have a good night."

"As you wish, my Lady."

Eating with one hand, Hermione started to review her work, re-reading her conclusions, trying to find some mistakes in it.

Sighing she jotted several ideas on a parchment before packing everything. It was then that she realized Teneb had been watching her the whole time. She returned his stare.

"Is there anything you wanted?"

Teneb did not seem phased by the annoyance in her voice.

"I must say you were one of the last people I thought I would see here."

Hermione shot him a dark look.

"Harry needed a friend," she replied simply. She walked to the see-through box and looked at her friend's blank face.

"Indeed..."

There was a moment of silence.



“How was it?” finally asked Hermione. She needed to know what her friend was going through.

Teneb looked at his hands.

“It’s difficult to explain...”

“Try me.”

Teneb’s eyes lost their focus, as if he was watching things out of her reach.

“It’s like an ocean, you’re drowning, your trying to stay at the surface, trying to swim to the shore, but you are always dragged away or under. You try to ride the flow, but sometime you’re thrown away...”

“But how did you come out of it?”

Teneb looked at her.

“My strength came back, my magic, and my guardian came to my help. They sheltered me and kept me from drowning completely.”

Hermione shot a look at Harry.

“Why isn’t he waking up? We need him...”

She felt Teneb get up and walk to her.

“You should stay in bed. Your mother would have your head if she knew.”

“She doesn’t need to worry about what she doesn’t know,” replied Teneb. He starred at his friend. “He will wake up, you know.”

Hermione sighed.

“I know, I just wished he could get up, and laugh at us for worrying like this over him.”

Teneb let out a small laugh.



“That seems like something he would do. It was worse on him. He channelled far more power than I even though his magical channels are newer than mine. It burnt you know. At first it was just a strong flow, but it started to burn so much that I thought I was on fire. I felt I was going to explode. I was aware of the smallest flicker of magic around, it echoed in me.”

The young elf shook himself out of his daze.

“I could hear you. You have stayed there for a long time haven’t you?”

Hermione nodded.

“The Queen agreed to let one of Harry’s friend stay in your world and Celen decided I would be the one to come.”

“It must be hard for you to be here.”

Hermione shrugged.

“It’s a bit lonely but I have enough work to keep me occupied. Your mother have arranged for a messenger to go to Hogwarts. The school is slowly getting back to normality and my friend doesn’t me there for now while Harry do.”

Teneb frowned.

“What happened?”

Hermione shook her head.

“We were attacked and you’ll leave it at that. Your prince kept his word to Harry and sent help. Concentrate on getting better and don’t worry about that.”

She looked at Harry once more.

“Do you think he will be changed?”

Teneb nodded.



“I know I feel different, even if I can't say how, I know something changed. The magic doesn't feel the same anymore.”

Hermione didn't answer, having nothing to say. She bid the elf good night and went to sleep in the bed that had been set up in the room at her request.

For the next days, she kept her vigil over her friend, seeing Teneb from time to time as the elf recovered quickly enough strength to be relieved from the Healer house. She heard that the Magis that had attacked her had been judged and sentenced though she didn't know what had been their punishment. Teneb started to practice to get back the strength he had lost by staying unconscious for nearly two weeks. It was then that the first effect of his ordeal was seen. His control had shattered under the pressure and his channels had been widened considerably, allowing for more magic to be used. It required the young elf to work intensively on fine tuning his control to prevent him from smashing someone with a simple banishing charm or create a tornado when he had wanted a simple breeze. He often came to see Harry, speaking so low that Hermione couldn't understand what he was saying. Sometimes he would talk to her. She welcomed those conversations since it was some of the only moment when she could discuss with someone else. Every morning, she went outside to practice her dueling against her personal dummy. One of the Seventh year had came up with them. They were golems of a sort, the ritual having been tweaked in a sort of conjuration combined with charms and transfiguration. It updated itself to the level of the conjurers and had the same knowledge.

There were some mornings when she felt like she wanted to take one elf to hit the other with. She usually took her frustrations out on the dummy or on moving targets she conjured and animated, blasting them with a sick pleasure.

Teneb found her on one of these occasions. She was standing in the yard behind Darkana. Having transfigured about ten rocks into ten bludgers then having animated them to behave like real ones, she had taken to duck, dive, roll and shoot curses, hexes and jinxes toward them. The bludger would be deactivated if she hit them straight on and would keep the record of the curses that had hit them.



It took her half an hour to get rid of all of them, by then she was panting, drenched in sweat, she was sore, could feel many bruises starting to form. Her left shoulder was dislocated and she was sure her right leg was broken as well as several ribs.

Nothing a few spells and some potions wouldn't solve.

Taking a deep breath, she slowly hobbled to the box she had taken with her and downed two vial of a strong healing draught and a numbing one. She then started to stretch thoroughly, knowing she would regret skipping it tomorrow if she did.

"It's a bit drastic."

Hermione quickly tied her hair in a loose ponytail.

"Perhaps, but none of those living around were maimed and it keeps me in shape, so I think I'll keep on." She bent to pick up the box and the cloak and outer robes she had discarded during her practice.

"Here let me take this," said Teneb, taking them before she could protest. "I didn't know it was that bad."

Hermione rolled her eyes.

"It's not that. Well, sure there is the odd insult or curse here and there from visitors when they realize who I am, but that's not the problem."

Teneb glanced at her.

"Then what is it?"

Hermione stopped and looked at him.

"It's your arrogance, your patronizing that get on my nerves."

Teneb frowned, not understanding.

"How so?"



“You are so proud of your power, of your rituals, of your enchantments. Yes, they are, but you are looking down on so many other magical fields: runes, Arithmancy, matrix, Potions.”

“We use a lot of herbs,” cut Teneb.

“Herbs, not Potions. Draughts that turns the drinker invisible, transform him into someone else, Healing draught, sleeping, pain numbing, love potion, truth serum, paralyzing potion, explosives...”

“But why take the time to brew those potions when you can cast a charm that will have the same effects.”

Hermione sighed.

“If I drink a potion to turn myself invisible, it is one less charm I have to use and less power I have to use.”

She turned to the young Athar.

“I could give you at least twenty poisons that are tasteless and odorless, that would kill you and you would never suspect it.” She took a deep breath. “I’ve been working on managing to create a sort of portable charm you would activate in time of need. Yet, every time someone learnt what I was doing, they looked down on me, saying that if one was too weak to produce a simple shield, then it was an idea, but that runes were useless and that I should use some type of enchantment that would take three times the power used to cast a shield.”

Teneb shrugged.

“Maybe we are happy with what we know. Elves were always notorious for pertaining traditions well humans were called always the curious ones who had to find new ways to things, always had to know how and why.”

Hermione smiled wilyly.

“Not every human... some are very happy to leave others find solution for them.”



Teneb returned the smile.

“My people looked down on everything the humans had an interest in and did not look into these fields like yours forgot about the ancient magic.” She let out a small humorless laugh. “Well, we can’t change the past, so if you showed me these runes of yours... It will at least give something to do. Everybody seemed to think I need to take it easy.”

“And they are right,” cut Hermione, “however you shouldn’t hurt yourself that much while looking at runes...”

Since then, Teneb always spent some time ‘helping her’ even though he hadn’t the slightest idea of what the runes could be use for or meant, he had an instinct about them that Hermione had quickly taken to trust.

It was during one of those time as both of them were arguing over the design of a particular set of runes, Teneb persistent in his belief that using an hexagonal lay out would be better than a pentagonal one.

“Teneb, if I use a six time ratio, it would spread the power too thin, a pentacle will be way better.”

“But it doesn’t feel right!”

“Teneb...” started Hermione, a bit annoyed at being told she was wrong. She had been trying to get this particular set of runes to work for hours and no combination seemed to have any effect. It was the last step to her portable shield project, a way to anchor that stupid spell.

“Hermione...”

“Don’t you Hermione me, Teneb. I told you the hexagonal lay out will not stable to anchor a powerful spell, it will just be enough for a tickling hex.”

Teneb had paled drastically and was looking at the box holding Harry.



Realization falling on her, Hermione turned, feeling the blood leaving her face. Harry gripping the edge of the box, trying to haul himself up without success. He looked at both his friends, Hermione shivering as she noticed the same silver circle around his pupils than Teneb's.

"Teneb..."

With that, he fell back in the box. Teneb looked at Hermione before springing forwards and catching Harry, holding his head out of the fluid filling the box.

"Go fetch the Healers, he's awake."

Hermione starred at her friend before her mind caught up with what had happened and she hurried outside. Harry was awake!



## **Chapter 34**

*In the end there is still hope...*

It had been two days since Harry had woken up and the healers had finally deemed him well enough to have visitors. The day after he had awakened, the Queen had asked to have him sent to the Healer houses in Horevald since his security would be better assured there.

They had used the permanent portals linking the different Healers houses. Even then, the journey had been taxing on him and Teneb and Hermione had been briefed several times not to tire him.

He was lying on his bed, looking bored to tears. However he perked up upon seeing them enter. He frowned when he noticed Hermione's presence.

"Hermione!"

Hermione was at his side in a few quick strides and hugged him tightly.

"Don't do this again, Harry, I swear if you ever pull something like this again, I-I-I..."

Harry looked at Teneb helplessly.

After a few minutes, once he was sure Hermione had calmed down enough, he pulled away a little.

"It's not that I don't like being hugged, Hermione, but I would like to know what happened. Last time I checked humans were not welcomed here..."

Teneb sat next to Harry, smiling a little at his blood-brother, relieved to see him awake.

"Valera asked for one of your friend to come. Celen chose her," he told him.

"Oh... How long was I out?"



“About three weeks... We’re the 24th of November” said Hermione, settling in the chair next to the bed.

“The Isles?”

“Saved, the channelling worked and they are stabilized though it will take years before the magical currents are completely restored.”

Harry leaned back against his pillows, a small smile on his face.

“Good... and Geryan?”

Teneb frowned a little.

“I don’t really know. I’ve been awake for a week now. Celen and everyone are trying to get the situation under control, in particular regarding the Geryan’s case”

Harry his low lip, thoughtful.

“So I won’t have to finish my duel with him then...”

Teneb shook his head.

“I don’t think so. I think he and the Queen came to an agreement.”

Harry nodded, relieved, the sun playing with the silver highlights in his hair and shining on his two white streaks.

He took a white strand and look at Teneb.

“We’ll have white hair before everything is done if it keeps on.”

“I hope not... Though the girls might find it appealing, you never know.”

A soft cough cut them.

“I’ll pretend I didn’t hear the last part,” said Hermione smiling a little.

Harry rolled his eyes.



“How are you, Hermione? How is everyone?”

Hermione’s face fell a little.

“I’m better now that you’re awake and I hope that everyone is alright.”

Harry frowned.

“What do you mean by hoping? What happened?”

Hermione sat.

“Voldemort attacked on Halloween. He sent several high ranked Demons to Hogsmeade.”

Harry closed his hands on the covers as Hermione carried on with her story.

“The Prince sent us three wings of dragons, the Vampires and Goblins helped, but even then, Hogsmead was destroyed by a huge fire and we lost several people, including students.”

Harry’s head shot towards her.

“Who?”

“From Gryffindor: Angelina and John, a fifth year.”

Harry closed his eyes, breathing slowly.

“You couldn’t have done anything for them, Harry. Nobody could have...”

The young Athar, nodded shakily.

“Anything since then?”

“Nothing significant. There are raids on Muggle villages and Light Families, but nothing out of the ordinary.”

Harry raised an eyebrow at the last part.



“They are... nothing out of the ordinary?...”

Hermione started to play with the hem of her sleeve.

“I don’t know if you are aware of the situation in our world Harry, of what is happening in the Muggle world, Harry... Raids have become a common occurrence...”

“That’s not a reason to treat them as such, Hermione!”

Hermione frowned.

“Doing so allow us to stay sane, Harry. If we started to think about all the deaths, we would be sent straight to St Mungo after a month.”

“How is it going, then, I never had the time to ask about the Muggle situation.”

Hermione bit her low lip.

“England is the worst off. Most of the Muggle have either been relocated to underground compound structures, or shipped to America, Asia or Africa.”

“It is that bad?”

“It is Harry. They took the Muggles by surprise and came up with a kind of shield to stop bullets and an enchantment that acts like a shock wave and stop bombs... They used poisons that they slipped into water supplies to kill as many Muggles as possible.”

“How are the muggles reacting to everything?”

“They ... most of them are afraid, Harry and resent magic. They haven’t seen any magic except for the curses the Death Eaters use. They have been more and more groups forming that kills wizards on sight be it Death Eaters or not. We even had to take away some children that had started to exhibit accidental magic. Their parents had reacted strongly against it...”

Harry bowed his head.



“Then what will happen when this is over?”

Hermione sighed.

“I have no idea... I think we'll try to segregate ourselves, break every bridge. No matter how much I loath the very idea of doing so, the Muggles will never accept magic after this war.”

Teneb cut in, seeing how depressed this was making the two humans.

“I think you should concentrate on the present, both of you. When will you be allowed to leave, Harry?”

Harry shot Teneb a smile.

“You're right, I was told, I should stay here for two more days so they can make sure that everything is alright and then I would be able to leave with the orders to take it easy.”

Teneb nodded.

“I'll help you. It took me several days to get my powers under control. Even now, I have trouble with the strength of my spells.”

Harry tightened his lips.

“I know. I felt something change with my magic.”

“The Xhan and Xhana helped me; they offered their help to you too.”

Harry's eye widened a little.

“I'll be a fool to refuse...”

He turned to Hermione who had been listening to them.

“What do you do with your time, Hermione? I don't think you stayed unoccupied the whole time.”

The witch rolled her eyes.



“I worked on my duelling and what I was taught in hand to hand fighting. Teneb gave me a hand with some of my projects... I was working on a new set of enchantments based on runes diagrams.

Harry shot a surprised look at Teneb.

“I didn’t think Elves used Arithmancy...”

“We don’t, but I seem to have a feel about it, the runes feel right when placed a certain way...”

Hermione huffed and raised her hand.

“Alright, I concede. You were right about the hexagonal setting, but I was right about the order.”

Teneb just sent her a smug grin that made her frown deepened. Harry thought it wiser to break them apart before Hermione resorted to magic.

However he didn’t even need to as the door opened to let Celen enter. The Prince sent Harry a smile that the young wizard returned though a little hesitantly.

“Good to see you awake, Athar...”

“Harry,” said the young man.

Celen looked at him expectantly.

“Call me Harry, Prince.”

“Only if you will call me Celen, Harry.”

“Agreed, Celen.”

Teneb smiled widely at Harry.

“I came here to tell these two that lunch is about to be served.”

Hermione stood up and hugged Harry once more.



“I’ll come by later, rest well.”

Teneb clasped his forearm to Harry’s.

“See you soon, Harry.”

For the two following days, Harry stayed in the Healing wing, reading books Teneb had brought him, meditating to try to sooth the magic raging through him.

He could feel his channels had widened considerably and were now wide open, letting the magic flow unchecked through him. Through meditation, he slowly started to tame his core. He could feel his had been changed thoroughly, though he couldn’t really grasp how.

After a last check up, the healers finally deemed him fit to leave their care.

Dressing in a loose tunic and pants, he walked out and through the corridors, looking for Teneb and Hermione.

He met several Healers, Deisers and Doijas before being called loudly.

“Harry!”

He turned and saw Teneb walking quickly to him.

“You’re free then I see.”

Harry nodded, smiling.

“I’m sick of always ending in the hospital. Where is Hermione?”

“Hysten asked her to teach him and some others how to achieve the animagus transformation. They should be here...” He started to walk out away, followed by an amused Harry.

“She didn’t tell me... It must have slipped from her mind. Why didn’t you teach them how to do it yourself?”

Teneb laughed.



“You really think I would have volunteered to spend hours instructing them when I had someone ready to do it in my place.”

Harry shook his head, feeling more rested than he had ever felt before.

“Here it is!” said Teneb stopping in front of the door.

Harry smirked at him and waved his hand in front of him, turning the door in a one way glass, allowing them to see inside, but not those inside to see them.

“Let’s see what they are up to.”

They found Hermione standing in front of a half-circle of soldiers, showing how to transfigure body parts to change their shape, colour, length.

“How long have they be training?”

“A few days, she started back at the manor with the men Hysten had sent there to protect us and Hysten himself. I’ve been helping her with the potion to reveal their forms.”

Harry watched as his friend started to walk through the Elves, Magis and Elementals, and frowned a little as he watched her interact with them.

“Let’s enter, I need to speak with her...” he said abruptly, ending the spell allowing them to see inside.

Knocking on the door, he opened it and stepped in.

“Hello, Hermione, Prime.”

“Harry! You’re up!”

Giving her a strained smile, he nodded.

“Yes, and I thought Teneb and I would come and give you a hand.”

Hermione frowned.



“I did not know you had achieved the transformation.”

Harry raised an eyebrow and with a pop turned into his feline form, followed shortly by Teneb. They moved a little before turning back to their bodies.

“Impressive...” said Hermione, trying to remember the attributes linked to big felines.

“What were you doing?”

“Self Transfiguration, the potion will be finished in a week.”

For the next hour, they helped the soldiers transfigure their limbs, reversing them to their original states when they were unable to or stuck in the middle of a change.

Teneb’s input was particularly appreciated as he could explain with first hand knowledge how the changes should go and how the magic had to be slightly tweaked to be used by Elves.

Finally, it was time for lunch and Hermione called the session to a hand.

Harry motioned to Teneb to go.

Once Hermione and he were alone, he asked Hermione to lock the door and cast a privacy ward.

The young woman frowned.

“Is there a problem, Harry?” she asked as she performed the spells.

“I just need to discuss something in private, Hermione.”

A minute later, she finished her casting.

“There, it should hold, now, what did you want to talk about?”

Harry sat on a chair and looked at her and looked at her with emerald piercing eyes, remaining silent.



“Harry? Are you feeling well? Do you want me to call healers?”

Harry shook his head.

“I was just trying to understand your behaviour, Hermione.”

His old friend frowned at that.

“What do you mean?”

“Do you realize how badly you are acting towards those soldiers? You are talking to them like they are simpletons.”

“What!”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“I saw you Hermione.”

“I was just trying not to let them walk on me!”

“And in doing so you acted like Malfoy would have, arrogantly and snobbishly. I thought you above such a thing, Hermione.”

“I did not, Harry! You didn’t hear what they called me, the curses and insults I got daily.”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“I lived a year among them without having the Queen or the Prince’s protection, Hermione, so I think I have a fairly good idea of what you’re talking about,” he said bitterly.

Hermione grew silent.

“I just wanted to shut them up and show them what I was made up, that I wasn’t a mere human pet of the Prince like I heard some of them called me.”

Harry sighed.



“Don’t sink to their level, Hermione. You won’t overcome centuries of resentment and prejudice in a few days. Hell! We will probably never see it ourselves, but maybe our children or grandchildren will.”

Hermione looked at her hand, worrying her lower lip.

“They are just so blind, Harry! They are disregarding whole areas of Magic because it is not tradition to study those Arts!” she snapped.

Harry shook his head.

“Only you, Hermione. Only you, Hermione would be rattled about this, but have you tried to interest yourself to the areas they had researched in depth?”

He chuckled as she shot him a puzzled look.

“If they don’t want accept your knowledge, then, it’s their loss. However that doesn’t stop you from learning about what they know and further you researches by using their own knowledge. I’m ready to bet they will even be eager to show it to you, in a desire to make them look superior. Take advantages of this!”

Hermione’s lips turned into a slight smirk.

“How Slytherin of you Harry...”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“Don’t let Snape hear you, he might have a stroke. As to the others, just ignore them. Act as if they don’t exist. They will see their mistake one day.”

“It’s more easily said than done...”

Harry stood up.

“Just think on it, Hermione, it would be after all the mature thing to do.” He walked to the door.



“Can you lift your spells, please; I don’t want to try my luck at any casting right now. Knowing my luck, I would probably end up blowing the wall.”

Hermione unravelled her spell work in a few seconds and soon they headed to the Dining room, both of them thinking on that was waiting for them.

[illegible]

Teneb was sitting next to Celen and was talking to his friend. He had spent many days during the past week talking with his friend, something he had not done for a while and now realized he had missed.

Djaryle was sitting in front of Celen, an empty seat to her right, just as there was an empty space to Teneb's left.

Finally, he saw his friend and the brown-haired witch enter and walk to them.

Harry pulled out Hermione's seat before going to sit besides Teneb.

Servants started to bring the meal and small talk was made over the course of the meal. Teneb watched amused at how Hermione behaved before leaning on Harry.

“You talked to her, didn’t you?”

Harry nodded.

"I think she was quite lost as to how to act here. I just cleared a few things..."

Teneb smiled.

“It will certainly make things easier for us if she can behave a little less coldly.”

Harry sent a wry look at his friend.



"It would make it easier if the 9/10th of the population of this place got their heads out of their..." he didn't finish his sentence, remembering the company he had.

Teneb raised his hands in surrender.

"Can't deny the truth here."

They went back to their lunch. Once it was over, Harry excused himself and went out to the gardens. Careful not to exert himself too much, he kept to a sedate walk, enjoying the fresh crisp air around him. It had rained recently and the smells were exacerbated. He reached an open space and went to sit on a bench, thinking back on everything that was going on.

He stayed there for long moments, relishing in the peace he was feeling. It had been a long time since he had been able to laze around and enjoy a moment of calm.

/It has been long since I last saw you that peaceful, Astyan... /

Harry looked to his right, a smile breaking his face.

>It is good to see you Rexeran>

He used their mind link, enjoying this closeness to his bonded. It had been long since they had last seen each other.

The Huge Golden Dragon lowered his head to touch Harry's chest.

/I know/ he said, sensing the young's man thoughts. /But there will come a time when we will enjoy our bond./

>I hope so, Rexeran, I hope so,> said Harry, petting the large head.  
>You were with me, weren't you? I could sense you...>

/I said I would stay with you through thick and thin, Astyan and I will keep my word./

Harry sighed.

>What happened to me, Rexeran?>



/Nothing that shouldn't have happened, Astyan./

*>It feels so strange, all this power, it nearly seems unnatural, Rexeran, nobody should have so much power.>*

Rexeran let out a deep rumbling sound.

/Astyan, this is your power, your magic, there isn't anything unnatural to it./

Harry raked a hand in his hair.

*>I feel like I'm some sort of Voldemort. I wasn't meant to be that powerful...>*

/What are you saying? You didn't steal this power; it was given to you and gained through experience... You were meant for this Astyan./

Harry let out a small laugh.

*>I don't really like the idea of being manipulated, Rexeran, and I fell like I'm being led to something, that I'm being shaped into something I'm not!>*

Rexeran offered him a draconian smile, devotion filling his eyes.

/You are who you are, Astyan. Nothing will change this, nor will make me abandon you./

Harry let himself be surrounded by the warmth emanating from the scale Rexeran had gifted him with nearly a year ago.

"Thank you, Rexeran, thank you..." he whispered, leaning against the scaly body.

/Come fly with me, Astyan, it has been long since we last took to the skies.../

Harry looked to the cloudy sky with longing. It would probably start to rain again soon, but he couldn't bring himself to care. It had been so long since he had last flown. He shot a look to the manor.



“Yes, but the Healers....”

/What they don't know can't hurt them and I'll be with you.../

Harry gave the matter two seconds of thought before smiling and standing up.

“Then let's fly, Rexeran.”

The golden Dragon crouched down, allowing Harry to climb on his back more easily. Once the young wizard had settled himself, the Sowaroc sprang in the air, opening his wings wide.

Teneb watched from the window, smiling at the joy he could feel through his blood brotherhood bond.

“He shouldn't be tiring himself like this...” said Hermione, clearly a bit peeved at her friend for disregarding the healers' advice.

Teneb shrugged.

“I think he needed that, Hermione.”

“But...”

“Hermione, Rexeran is with him and will let nothing happen to Harry while he will be under his care,” stated Teneb, a bit annoyed at the young woman's pushiness.

Hermione shot him a searching look, making Teneb realized how worried she had been for her friend.

“I'm sorry, I forgot you don't really know what a rider bond entail. Harry couldn't be safer for now.”

Hermione nodded slowly, worrying her lower lip.

“I-I'd like to apologize for my behaviour... I-Harry talked to me and... he was right on some point, I shouldn't have acted like I did...”

Teneb bowed his head a little.



“I think there is responsibility on both sides, but I’m not really the one you should be apologizing to...”

She pursed her lips.

“I can’t say that thought makes me happy,”

Teneb let out a small laugh.

“Hysten is a good man and he chose the people he brought to you for those lessons. You might be surprised...”

Hermione mock-curtsied.

“Then I look forwards it.”

They watched in silence as the golden spot in the sky swerved in and out of the clouds, diving, rolling.

“Could you teach me about wandless magic, Teneb?”

Teneb raised an eyebrow at her and smirked.

“I had been wondering when you would ask.”

Hermione rolled her eyes.

“Let’s say that someone talked some sense in me.”

Laughing, Teneb offered her his arm.

“I’ll show you some books and get you started.”

Harry only came back for dinner and quietly stepped in the dining room.

He paused a little upon spotting Hermione talking animatedly with Teneb and two other people.

“... but it was said in a Treaty of Wandless practice, that you needed an internal focus.”



A middle-age looking Elf answered her.

“That’s true, Lady, but as Carth stated in his works, a focus can help you access your magic, but it will hinder your casting by making you dependant. It is better explained in Holdan’s treaty.”

“Where could I find it? I’m nearly done with Carth’s treaty and I thought his works brilliant but a little subjective.”

The elf smiled.

“It’s true, but his work is accurate. Holdan’s treaty is quite complementary to Carth’s. I’ll lend it to you after dinner and I’ll look forwards your comments. I had never thought of this approach.”

“It will be a pleasure.”

Harry sat next to Teneb who was watching Hermione with an amused expression.

“What happened?”

“She finally asked me to teach her wandless magic and I took her to the library.”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“And how do you explain this?” He pointed to Hermione and the two elves.

“She started on some books and started to hound me with questions, half of them I didn’t even understand. So I took her to Tean and Kher. They are scholars leading the research here. Apparently, they hit right off. You should have heard them. I couldn’t understand a word of what they were talking about.”

“That’s Hermione for you,” said Harry with a smile.

“How was flying?”

Harry’s smile would have lit up the whole room if the torches hadn’t already done the work.



“It was... it was like going home.”

Teneb nodded.

“I know, I felt the same when Gae took me out. I trust Rexeran dampened your magic until you could get your control back.”

Harry nodded.

“He’s using our bond to control it.”

“I will help you with it tomorrow. I found some good exercises and a safe place to practice.”

“Tomorrow at dawn?”

Teneb made a face but nodded, knowing they were less likely to be bothered that early in the morning.

The rest of the dinner passed quietly and Harry went to rest, feeling tired, having not recovered completely from his ordeal.

The next morning passed in a blur as Harry practiced under Teneb’s watch and started on gaining back his control over his magic. They had their lunch brought to their room and only left it in the evening, tired, but happy with their progress.

For the rest of the week, the two of them kept to themselves and to their dragons, working on their control under the watch of their bonded,

They spent their evenings with Hermione, Celen when he wasn’t attending meetings, and Djaryle.

Harry didn’t know how to act around the female elf. On one hand he felt like he could trust her with everything, while the other part of his mind was questioning the reason behind this trust and was wary of Teneb’s friend.

They were coming from one of their training session when they met a herald.



The man stopped in front of them and bowed.

“Athars, I was asked by the Xhan and Xhana to bring you to Darkana, they wish to speak with you.

Teneb and Harry exchanged, both wondering what this was about.

“If you could wait for us while we go warn some people about this, we will follow you.”

The herald nodded.

“I will be in the hall,” he said before bowing again and leaving them.

Harry looked at Teneb.

“Do you know what’s this is about?”

Teneb shrugged.

“I have no idea. I know they wished to help with our training...”

Harry stayed silent, pondering in this summon.

“Why do I have a feeling that it is more than just something to do with our training?

“Probably because it is... Come on, no point in trying to guess. We might as well warn my father we are leaving.”

An hour later, they both left the manor and reached quickly Kahera. Two priests were waiting for them and Harry was pleased to see that Erin was waiting for them. Leaving their horse in the yard with the stable hands that had been asked to care for them, they were led inside the Powers’ Temple to be ushered inside the core chamber.

The young wizard looked around. The room was bare. Except for the drawings and runes carved in the granite walls, there nothing to ornate the room. Harry looked at the carvings but couldn’t decipher them.



“Those date back to the Ancients’ era. Their language has been lost to the ages...”

He turned to look at the two adults standing up in front of them.

“There is only one other room like this one in our main temple. All the other core’s rooms were created later on and do not bear those markings and blessings.”

Harry nodded respectfully to them.

“Somehow I don’t think you called us to give us a history lesson,” he said, smiling.

Cya returned his smile with a far away look.

“Indeed not, Athar. Luan and I felt that you needed some guidance on the path you are taking.”

Teneb looked at them inquisitively.

“I thought you weren’t allowed to interfere in conflicts out of our world.”

Luan nodded.

“That is true, young elf, but our Gods gave us their blessings and allowed us to lend you our help.”

“You will need our teaching, Athars. We have Seen some of the futures that might occur,” stated Cya, face grave.

Harry looked at them closely.

“And what did they entail?”

Cya offered him a small smile.

“You know that visions of the far future are not reliable, Athar. The smallest action can modify them.”

Harry shrugged. It had been worth a try.



“This room was built to allow the Xhan and Xhana to channel our gods’ power without harming those around us. Nothing can accidentally escape it once its power is awakened.”

Harry and Teneb nodded, understanding how such a room could be useful.

“We can sense the change in your core, we felt the power you possess increase as we expected it to do after such a trauma but though you gained quite a good control back over it, we do not feel you truly know how to wield it...” said Luan in a gentle tone.

“We know what it is to possess and channel that much power and that is why we are offering you our help.”

Harry and Teneb shared a glance then bowed together, hands crossed across their chest.

Cya and Luan returned their salute.

“Very good Athars, we will need you to wear your torque.”

Harry opened a pouch he had taken to use to store the various pieces of jewellery he had been gifted with, there was his rider ring, the locket Terio had given him and a bracelet. Taking the torque, he clasped it around his neck and turned to the Xhan and Xhana.

Cya and Luan nodded silently.

“Now sit down,” said Luan, settling to floor crossed-legged.

“I want you to empty your mind, clear it from all thoughts. Fill it with peace, calm,” Cya’s voice was hypnotizing, and Harry felt calm invade him. He resisted it. The warning from his guardian was still fresh in his memory.

“We can’t go in a trance! The plan is not safe.”

Cya turned to him, eyes wide opened and Harry repressed a shiver. Cya’s eyes had turned completely white, shimmering with power, her aura as well as Luan’s had spiked violently.



“You will be under our protection and guidance, Athar. You have our word,” Cya said, her voice slightly disincarnated.

Harry nodded and allowed himself to be swept in a mild trance by the Xhana’s voice as she kept speaking. However he did not reach the Spirit plan as usual, but seemed to float in a thick mist. Looking around he tried to clear his surrounding only to make the mist wrap more tightly to him.

A small whisper echoed round him, like the sounds of a small breeze. It grew louder and soon Harry could make out words and a shape appeared through the mist.

He went down on a knee.

“Solyen...”

The shape solidified a little but still remained blurred. A laugh rang like bells in this void.

“Rise, Athar, you do not need to kneel before me.”

Harry obeyed, but dare not look this being in the eyes. He did not know who or what it was, but he wasn’t about to anger something that had enough power to smash him like a mere bug.

He felt something warm tilt his head upwards.

“You need not fear me, Astyan. We have been friends for long...”

“What?”

The Shape seemed amused.

“You will remember soon enough, Astyan, but for now, I have a lot to teach you.”

Harry wanted to ask more. It was not the first time that people talked to him as he had known them a long time ago. He wanted to know why. He had the detestable feeling that they all knew something he didn’t and he hated that feeling.



“Forget it for now, Astyan and focus on the present time.”

The mists swirled around him, making his mind fuzzy.

“We have little time, Astyan and much for you to learn... You will understand one day.”

What followed would only be a blur to Harry as knowledge was drilled in his mind.

[illegible]

Hermione gently closed the manuscript she had been reading. It really was fascinating... So many new fields to explore... Looking at her watch, she realized she would be late for the Animagus training with Hysten and his men if she didn't hurry up.

Gathering all her notes, she carefully put them back in her bags and went to put all the books she had taken back to their shelves before walking out of the Library. On her way out, she saluted Tean. She had enjoyed talking with them over the past week.

She turned right and started on the staircases thinking on what they would do today.

They had all progressed nicely and would drink the potion in a few days once they had finished fine tuning their control and accelerated the transfiguration.

She reached the right floor and headed on her left. She had barely taken a step that she was caught from behind, a cloth covering her mouth and nose the strong smell hitting her.

She tried to fight back, trying to twist from her captor's grips, kick him. She called on the wandless magic Teneb had been teaching her during the past days though she had made little progress.

Given the cry from the aggressor she had to have hit something. Her triumph was short-lived as a second pair of hand grabbed her and



roughly pinned her face against the wall. Concentrating on her Animagus form, she started to shift.

But before any major changes could have occurred, her head was yanked back by the hair.

“Don’t even think of shifting or I’ll put you down like the animal you are, human.”

Panic filling her she nodded slightly, feeling drowsier and drowsier and the drug imbibing the cloth started to make its way through her system.

Through the fuzziness invading her mind, she reminded her pendant and tried to focus on it until it became impossible to do so and Darkness claimed her.

When she came back to her sense, she was laying on cold stones. The air was damp and made her shiver slightly.

“I think our guest is waking up, Vala,” said a masculine voice.

Someone walked close to her and a boot nudged her roughly, pushing her on her back.

“Indeed, she is, Orien... Aren’t you, pet? Come on, open your eyes, we are dying to meet one of your people.”

Hermione thought it wiser to still pretend to be unconscious.

“I said to wake up, human,” said the one called Vala, pinching her arm.

Hermione opened her eyes wide and scurried to her feet and went to find her wand in one of her holsters.

“Don’t go looking for your stick, human,” said the male tauntingly.

Hermione looked up and saw him waving it in the air.

“Give it back to me,” she snapped, trying to sound confident, but not preventing her voice from trembling.



"I don't think so," said Orien, looking closely at the wand. "So this is what your people came up with to use magic... Pitiful," he sneered.

He turned to Vala.

"But, Vala, it seems like we're being terrible hosts. We forgot to introduce ourselves and our friends."

The door behind them opened and several others made their way inside. There were elves, Magis and Elementals, all of them wearing a black and dark grey uniform with a rune embroidered on their right breast in silver.

"Our friends and both of us were part of Geryan's army when he opposed the Queen and her foolish plan. But he folded in front of the Athar and has gone back to that Ynris bitch. But we know we are right. Your people bring nothing but troubles and pain in his wake. And we will make sure that the Queen renounces her plans and step down."

Hermione stared at them, disbelief clear on her face.

"You are mad, all of you! You won't get away with it! They will find me!"

Orien laughed.

"Keep telling yourself help will come, pet, if it is what will keep you alive. But I can assure you nobody will find you..." retorted Vala.

They all made their way to the door. Orien stopped suddenly and sent a wicked smirk at the female standing next to Hermione. He took the two hands of the wooden stick and snapped it in two clean parts before throwing them to the floor.

"I don't think this will be of much use to you, pet..."

Hermione didn't say anything, leaning on the wall, one hand clutched to her chest as a stabbing pain erupted in it, knocking the breath out of her. Vala smiled coldly.

"Sweet dream, human."



They all left, the door closing behind them.

Hermione blinked, trying to come up with everything that had happened while taking deep breath to try to push the pain of the backlash away. She slowly walked to where the pieces of her wand laid.

She gathered them and put them in her pocket, maybe someone would be able to salvage something from it. Once she was sure she could stand steadily she started to check on her cell. It was about six by six meters made of stones. They were damp and in some places covered by moss. No windows, no cracks between the stones. The door was made of some kind of metal without any opening.

*“Hermione....”*

She whirled on her heel trying to see where it had come from.

*“Hermione...”*

“Where are you?”

*“You left us, Hermione... You killed us...”*

Hermione’s eyes widened as her surroundings shifted to her parents’ house. However the house was in ruins, smoke and fire still swirling around her as she walk in the living room. Looking up, she saw that the ceiling had disappeared and that the Dark Mark was in the sky, snake swirling out of its mouth.

She walked in the kitchen only to find the mutilated body of her father.

“Dad! Dad!”

She leaned on him and screamed as he opened his bloodshot eyes.

*“You killed me, my own daughter!”*

“No, no no no no...”

*“If you had been normal, nothing would have happened...”*



Hermione pulled away and run upstairs, unable to repress a scream as she found the violated corpse that had been her mother sprawled on the floor.

“Mum! NO!”

*“Murderer...You abandoned us, Hermione. You left your parents to die...”*

“Shut up, shut upshutup!” She brought her hands to her ears and closed her eyes. “You’re not real, you’re not real, you’re safe.”

*“You left us...”*

Hermione curled in a small ball as the disfigured bodies of her parents kept on blaming her. Then the scene faded away only to shift to Hogwarts, but it was a burning Hogwarts with Death Eaters swarming the place, killing and violating students left and right.

One after the other, her worse fears played in front of her, again and again, every time more morbid details being added to the picture. Hermione tried to raise Occlumency shields, to resist this attack, but her protections seemed to crumble away as time passed and she grew more and more drained. How much time had passed, she didn't know but to her it seemed to drag forever and ever. Finally she couldn't find the strength to resist anymore and was swept away inside her darkest fears, retreating further and further inside her mind, unable to cope with those visions.

[illegible]

Hysten looked at his men with a proud smile. They were in their prime, trained to be the best physically, magically and mentally.

As soon as he had been put in charge of the Queen's elite he had culled out all those who had bought their way in and recruited his men on harsh criteria. He could vouch for their loyalty. Having the human teach them had been a gamble on his part and at the start he had thought he had made a mistake as the girl had acted haughtily causing unrest among his men. However as soon as her friend had



been released, her behaviour had changed. She apologised for her attitude, a fact that had helped a lot. Since then, he could say that those lessons had been useful.

He looked around: his men were having fun transfiguring his limbs while waiting for the young human to show up. That in itself was a bit strange since the young woman was usually first to arrive.

Suddenly he felt his necklace heat up. Looking down he saw it pulsating with a purple light, meaning his human charge was in danger. Then the signal died out.

Worry seeped inside him. He knew the human or Hermione as she had said to be called would no call on him if she couldn't defend herself.

"Everyone, spread in the castle in teams of two and search it for Lady Hermione or any hints as to her location. Go!"

He motioned to his second to follow him as he left the room. They didn't have to search long. After a few minutes, Hysten was called by some of his men. He arrived to see the bags the witch carried everywhere with her, books spilled on the floor. There was some blood on the stone wall and a strong smell was floating in the air.

"Zariax," he muttered darkly.

"Tyam, choose three men and examine the scene, report anything, any residue that might give us a hint as to who kidnapped Lady Hermione or where they took her. Sezyanne, take all the men you need and question all the people that might have noticed strangers in the castle or people behaving oddly. June, you and four men will check the wards and check the list of people that passed them. Report all that might be suspect."

Immediately the Elites parted, some using their communicators to call reinforcement. Hysten activated his own.

"Jihar?"

There a few seconds of silence before the General answered.



“Yes?”

“Hysten speaking, we have a code two”

“Who?”

“The human.”

Followed some graphic cursing that Hysten chose to ignore. Finally, the general seemed to calm slightly.

“Any witness?”

“No, nor is there any hints as to the culprit.”

“Where is the Athar?”

Hysten thought for a few seconds before recalling the Eldoiras’ arrival.

“At Kahera with Teneb. The Xhan and Xhana required their presence.”

“For how long?”

“We weren’t told, at most a few days.”

Jihar grimaced.

“Then we should get to it quickly, I will warn the Queen.”

“She can’t have been taken more than a few minutes ago. Have someone check on every portal that was opened or for any power surge inside the castle.”

“You think they could have been keyed in?”

Hysten frowned.

“I prefer to cover all the possibilities. Get some men to read the Wards to know who came in and out today.”

There was a pause.



“Alright, the Queen has screeners working on the human magical signature, they want you to come as soon as possible to follow the tracking the charm you have on the human.”

“I’ll be there as soon as possible.”

“I’ll meet you there.”

“Understood”

Hysten cut the communication. Then, after making sure all his men were assigned a task, he headed for the Screeners’ wings.

Screeners, Seers, Empaths and Telepaths of the higher levels were living in special quarters in a particular wing of the castle.

These rooms had been heavily shielded to protect the over sensitive minds of these men and women. They rarely went out and when they did, it was with thick shields and a dampening potion clouding their senses.

Hysten reached the doors leading to their wing. He took one of the necklaces hanging on the walls and put it on. This was compulsory for all the visitors in order to protect those living there.

He placed his hand on the door and waited for someone to let him through. A few moments later, the doors parted and he stepped in.

“Hysten, we were waiting for you to begin.”

The Queen looked stressed. She led him in a small circular room. Its walls were made of smooth white marble; in the middle, there was a table made of marble too and engraved with several runes to allow the magical energy to flow around and through it. Several cushioned armchairs and chairs were placed around it, three of them occupied by Screeners.

Valera motioned to him to take a seat as she sat next to one of the Screeners.



“If you would give us the stone anchoring your tracking charm on the human?” asked one of the screeners.

Hysten took off his necklace and handed it to the Magis. He watched with a morbid fascination the thin gloved hand place the necklace in the middle of the table.

The Screeners always put him ill at ease. Maybe it was the pale translucent skin that spoke of years of staying indoors, or the fact that they kept their eyes hidden behind a black bind tied to the back of their head.

Those thoughts were pushed out of his mind as he watched the three screeners concentrate and focus their power on his necklace and the tracking spell linking it to the young witch.

Their surroundings started to fade and instead of the white room, Hysten was flying over the land. Looking under him he tried to find where they were.

Spotting tall mountains, he had his answer.

Meyan was the only land where there was such a chain of mountains that particular. There were several abandoned mines in those mountains dating back to the time when Dwarves and Elves had been allies. Elves rarely needed raw materials in abundance and so scarcely went to the mines.

They closed on the mountains and started to over above a specific area.

Hysten recognized the Alken's Deep, The Dark Twins and Lunai's Passage. This area was one people tended to avoid. There were many stories surrounding this area, stories about revengeful spirits, creatures that roamed the abyss of the mountains...

Then the landscape faded back to the white walls of the Screeners' room.

“We can't go any further, you're Highness. The orcalk mines are blocking our senses but the human is being kept in this area.”



The Queen nodded slowly.

“Is there a way to get around the orcalc interference?”

The Magis Screener shook his head.

“It would require more power and we wouldn’t be able to channel it.”

Hysten stood up and bowed to the Queen and the tree Screeners.

“You already helped us more than you know. Your Highness, if I might be excused?”

The Queen nodded and Hysten hurried out of the room and out to meet Jihar. They needed to search the mountain, and needed to do it quickly before something happen to the Athar’s friend.

Three days later, they had not made much progress.

The area was a maze of caves, tunnels filled with creatures or traps. They had barely searched a tenth of the area and there hadn’t been a single hint to where the human was being detained.

As the sun started to set, he oversaw the change of teams and made sure all were equipped. Once that was done, he and Jihar used a portal to travel back to Horevald where the Queen was waiting for their results.

He waited for her outside of the audience chamber. People started trickling of the room, talking in hushed whispers, making Hysten smile.

The four parties had been shaken by the King’s destitution and the fact that his wife had turned not to be as lax as his husband in regards to their power plays in the background. They were still greatly unbalanced by Valera’s decisions but the Prime knew that they would regain some of their footing and make things difficult for the Queen.

He stepped inside and noticed that Geryan was still talking with her, Doryan standing by her left, Celen at her right.

“Prime?”



He straightened himself.

“Your Highness?”

“Was there any progress?”

“Nothing, your Majesty.”

The queen went to sit down on the throne and took her head in her hands.

“She must be found quickly, Hysten. The Athar will not take her disappearance lightly.”

“I’ve assigned all my men except for those guarding you and more than half of Jihar’s on this task. We’re doing everything we can to make sure she is found.”

A soft cough cut him and he realized Geryan had still been present.

“Excuse me, you Highness, but is something the matter?”

Valera eyed him warily, debating whether or not she should tell him of their current predicament.

“The human friend of the Athar was kidnapped yesterday. The Screeners managed to track her down to Alken’s Deep and the Dark Twins.”

Geryan looked back to the Queen, face cold.

“And you think it justify such a deployment of men and means?”

Valera stood up and looked down on the former High Duke of Meyan. She had named one of his distant cousins in his place.

“I would do so had it been an Elf, an Elemental or a Magis that had disappeared, Geryan!”

“But she’s just a human! What harm will it do?”



Hysten kept silent, though he knew many thought so but wisely kept silent.

He had come to appreciate the young human female and had been amused by her thirst for knowledge. However she was still young, even by human standards and lacked the experience and level-headedness age would bring with it.

“What harm? She is in a world unknown to her, surrounded by people that would not mind seeing her gone as you just prove and was taken by people that aren’t likely to mean her good! She’s just a child, Geryan!”

Geryan scoffed.

“She’s a human; she had nothing to do here to begin with.”

Valera sneered.

“I’m glad to see friendship has so little value in your eyes.”

Geryan frowned.

“What do you mean?”

“She came upon my demand and out of concern for her friend that had been sent in a coma while helping us.”

“The Athar has awakened more than a week ago. She had no longer any business here,” retorted the Elf.

Valera shook her.

“I see it’s useless to try to make you see reason.”

Geryan nodded.

“I think we will have to agree to disagree on this issue, Valera.”

“Unfortunately.”



Geryan bowed sharply and walked towards the doors, he stopped as he was about to leave them.

“Where do you say they had track her?”

Valera looked at him, an eyebrow raised.

“I thought you didn’t care, Geryan?”

“Don’t be an idiot Valera. I could care less about your little human pet. However I do not wish to be implicated in this.”

“And how would you?”

Geryan was silent for a few moments then spoke up.

“I had a base in one of the orcalk mines near Alken’s Deep. I thought it to be a strategic location since the mineral blocked magical senses. I will give its coordinates to the Prime.” He whispered a few words to the clerk that was assigned to write down everything that was said during audience. The young elf nodded and quickly wrote it down.

Valera nodded to the man.

“You have my gratitude, Geryan.”

The Elf shrugged.

“That means nothing Valera. I just despise kidnappers more than humans...” he said before walking out.

Valera turned to Hysten.

“Check on those coordinates immediately. I don’t think Geryan has anything to do with this. However one of his supporters might have decided to act.”

Hysten nodded and bowed. He was about to leave when the Prince’s voice stopped him.

“Prime? If my mother allows it, I would like to come with you.”



Hysten glanced to the Queen who seemed torn.

“Celen...”

“I think it would be good for the men to see the Prince help them, Valera,” said Doryan. “However, the Prince will have to be escorted. He is not to be left alone.”

Hysten nodded, though he could see the idea didn't go well with the young elf. He wasn't very happy with the idea of doing some baby-sitting either. He knew the youngling had been trained but he had never had to fight.

Valera sighed.

“Very well, but be careful, Celen.”

Hysten bowed low to the Queen, went to the clerk to take the coordinates. He then walked followed by the Prince. They reached the Portal chamber in silence and travelled back to Alken's Deep.

Hysten tried to repress the chills this place was giving him. There must be some truth to the stories going on about these mountains.

The moonlight was casting moving shadows that gave the illusions of spectres roaming the grounds. He could see the torches of the soldiers searching the grounds.

“Follow me, please, my Prince.”

He headed to the main tent where they kept in communication with the various team searching the area.

He stepped in and went to Jihar.

Everyone present bowed as the Prince entered. Celen nodded and watched as the Prime approached the large map and examined it closely.

“Who is closer to this place?” he said, checking on the paper he was holding in his hand.



A soldier answered him quickly.

“Elite Carenyl, 1st class Hyron and 2nd class Gaes and Fiona, Prime.”

Hysten nodded.

“Call them and tell them to meet us here.” He pointed to a spot on the map. “I want four men ready to leave in five minutes.”

He motioned to Celen to follow him to a smaller tent.

“You need to change, my Prince.”

He eyed the Prince’s clothes then handed him a dragon skin armour plate to put under a black shirt he handed him. He then gave him a warm tunic doubled with black fur.

“Stay close to us and don’t take unnecessary risks, my Prince.”

Celen nodded as he finished closing his shirt and put on his tunic.

“I will also ask you to obey my orders once we will be out there. I mean you no disrespect, but the situation....”

Celen held up his hands to calm the older Elf.

“I’m well aware of the situation, Prime. You won’t have to fear disobedience on my part.”

Hysten nodded and left the tent.

Meeting with the four other men that were coming with them, they started to make their way to the place Geryan had given them.

It wasn’t an easy task as they had only the moonlight to help them guide themselves. More than once they tripped over rocks or nearly fell. Finally they met with the team waiting for them.

Quietly, Hysten informed them of the situation and they entered the web of tunnels running through the mountains.



They lit their torches and made their way down the bowels of the Southern Dark Twin.

Celen shivered as some water drops hit him.

The tunnel was dark; their torches were casting shadows on its walls that were starting to play on the Prince's mind. He was growing more and more nervous as time passed. All the stories he had ever heard about those mountains were coming back to his mind and he walked a little closer to the soldier at his side. Not that he was scared... He was just... cautious.

They had placed silencing enchantments over themselves and the silence was straining Celen's nerves. It was too silent.

He could see the veins of orcalk running on the walls on the tunnels, appearing, disappearing only to reappear a few meters further. Sometimes the whole wall seemed to be made of it. Celen had only seen so much orcalk once in his life. It had been when his mother had taken him to visit the prison. All the cells' walls had been covered with it. Before that, the young prince had only seen it used for some shields and a few other pieces of weaponry. Those tunnels were reminding him of the prison.

He reported his thoughts on the situation at hand. They had gone deeper in the mountains and Hysten was using a small little device to guide the group, carrying it in his palm.

Suddenly they stopped. Celen barely avoided hitting the Elemental in front of him.

"They are here. Battle Formation."

Hysten turned to Celen.

"I would prefer you go back to the camp."

Celen opened his mouth to protest but didn't have time to do so.



“But somehow, I don’t think you will,” added the Prime with a tight smile. “I’ll ask you to stay by my side and to be careful. We do not know how many they are inside.”

The Prince nodded.

Hysten turned to look at his men, feeling proud of them as he saw they had formed teams of two: one to shield, one to attack. This was the traditional way to attack when in small numbers.

“We don’t want to raise their suspicions. So I want everyone to keep a low profile. Spread out in this area and take down everyone you will meet. There will be time later on to interrogate them. Do not waste time in useless questionings.”

“Understood, Prime.”

The soldiers bowed and started to move away, shadows among the darkness. All of them left their torches against a wall, not willing to announce their presence for a bit of light.

“You were taught some shields, weren’t you?”

Seeing the nod of his prince, the Prime continued.

“I will ask you to shield me then, Your Highness.”

Celen squared his shoulders, a determined look crossing his face.

“Lead the way, Hysten.”

The Prime smiled and headed straight ahead, Celen on his right, slightly behind him.

For a few minutes they did not meet anyone though they could hear people talking near them. Hysten suddenly flattened himself to the wall, tugging on Celen’s arm nearly sending him kissing the stone ground.

“Umbra”



A grey veil fell in front of Celen eyes as they were both cloaked by shadows.

He watched with wide eyes as three people passed before them talking among themselves, laughing.

“How long do you think it will last?”

One let out a high pitched laugh, making Celen assume it was a female.

“I bet it would not see the end of the week and you Kraïn?”

“Scum like her is resilient. I think it will hold until the Solstice.”

The three laughed before walking away.

*At least we know for sure she is here.*

Celen nearly jumped out of his skin when he heard Hysten voice in his head.

*Telepathy, my Prince.*

The young elf blushed, embarrassed.

Hysten took off the charm cloaking them then resumed their walk.

They met another group, but this time, Hysten sprung to action and with a few well placed spells and enchantments, the four people were tied, gagged and placed in a corner under an invisibility spell.

*They are former followers of Geryan...*

Celen looked to one of the unconscious soldiers. They were dressed in dark, grey and silver with a rune stitched over their right breast.

*How can you say it?*

Hysten pointed to the rune.

*It was altered slightly, but you can still see the original design.*



They met five other soldiers wearing this uniform and took them out in the same way.

They continued to walk but having met nobody for ten minutes, they stopped and Hysten contacted his men through his communicator that had been slightly altered to be able to function in the orcalc mine.

“Apparently they met little resistance, except for a few cases.”

He approached the stone to his mouth and spoke but was cut as a spell narrowly missed him.

Celen immediately cast a triple shield over them and went into a defensive stance ready to counter whatever their opponent might throw at them.

A furious exchange of spells followed, several of them hitting the walls and roof of the tunnel making large chunks of stone fall from them.

Still deflecting the spells coming their way, Celen shot one to the pieces of stone lying on the ground and levitated then before shooting them to their opponents.

It seemed to be their downfall. Distracted by the rocks, they missed a few spells shot at them and were soon bound and gagged on the floor.

Hysten looked at Celen. Blood was trickling down his face from a shallow cut on his right temple, testimony of a cutting curse.

“Good thinking there...” he sighed, wiping the blood out of his eyes.

He checked that none of their prisoners had been too greatly hurt, before looking up.

“Very well, gather all your prisoners and bring them to the cave situated at .”

He cut the communication and turned to Celen.



“Well, looks like we have a few people to fetch.”

Fifteen minutes later about Twenty-five people were gathered in a medium-sized cave lit by torches. Their gags had been taken off, but they had been put under a silencing charm.

Hysten looked other them and lifted the spell keeping them silent before speaking up.

“Very well, you have played and lost. Now, I want to know where Lady Hermione is.”

Silence met his question.

“You know you will tell, me eventually, so why not make this short and easy for all of us?”

A female Magis let out a sharp laugh.

“You really are full of yourself, Prime.”

Hysten just sent her a cold glance.

“And you are?”

“Shut up!” snapped a male Elf at his comrade.

The Magis rolled her eyes at him.

“Don’t be an idiot, Orien. You know very well that we have nothing left to loose.”

“Vala...”

“Orien,” she mimicked mockingly.

Hysten waved his hand, silencing them again.

“I want two of you to guard them. You have permission to knock them out should it be needed. I want everyone else to search this whole place. Find her.”



As everyone spread out, Hysten took his communication stone and quickly informed Jihar of the situation as well as asking for people to come help them search and take the prisoners to holding facilities.

It took them several hours before they managed to spot the entrance of the cave in which the human was locked. Hysten and Jihar hurried through the tunnels to where several of their men were gathered. Pushing through them, he reached a wall of orcalk with several markings engraved on it in spiralling patterns.

Hysten followed them with his finger, muttering in his breath.

“A sealing enchantment... Leeching...”

There was a small pause his eyes widened.

“A Nightmare spiral...” Gasps followed his declarations. Hurriedly, he read the other markings and ordered everyone to step back.

“My Prince?”

Celen walked to his side, curious.

“How can I help, Prime?”

“I trust you received some training in High Magics and how to break spirals?”

Celen nodded, face darkening slightly.

“I will need your help. The nightmare spiral will require my entire focus. You will have to take care of the three minor spirals here,” he pointed to a small spiral on the right and to two others on the left.

“You can count on me, Prime.”

Hysten nodded and focused on his magic, starting to glow. Strings of magic started to shot from his finger tips and hit the wall. Celen followed his example and soon both were focusing on the spirals. The orcalk was opposing their magic, providing a natural barrier against magic.



Slowly the markings started to glow. But it took about ten minutes for some of the marks to fade, thus breaking the spirals when it should have only taken one at most.

The wall shimmered and slid down revealing a small cave.

Hysten was leaning on the wall, panting. Breaking those spirals had taken a lot from him and from the Prince as the young man was wobbling on his feet.

But he wasn't about to back down now. Taking a torch from a soldier, he stepped in the cave.

"Lady Hermione?"

Frowning, he turned slowly, trying to spot the human.

A muffled sob caught his attention and he turned on his heels. He finally saw here. She was huddled in a shadowed corner, holding her knees to her chest, rocking back and forth, muttering and sobbing at the same time.

Slowly, he walked to her as she was a frightened creature.

"Lady Hermione?"

Straining his hearing, he managed to catch a few words.

"... all dead... sorry... no, don't..."

Crouching next to her, he could see that the three days she had spent here had taken their toll on her. She looked dehydrated. She was dirty; her hair was one tangled mess and she sported several cuts and many scratches on her arms, legs and face mostly.

"Lady Hermione..."

She didn't seem to hear him.

Sighing, he waved his hand towards her and caught her as she slumped against the wall.



Carrying her in his arms, he made his way outside, a little unsteady on his feet as exhaustion caught up with them.

Many soldier looked at him and the human with pity and a little horror shining in their eyes. One of them stepped forwards.

“Prime?”

Hysten looked at him with a cool look.

“What, Carenyl?”

The Elf shifted a little.

"I-I can carry her if you wish."

Hysten shot him a piercing look.

"It is a long way back to the camp, you won't manage it alone."

Another soldier stepped forward.

**“I will help.”**

“And so will I.”

“And I.”

Several soldiers and members of the Elite volunteered.

Throat tightening, Hysten nodded and gently handed the human to Carenyl.

Perhaps there was hope for them...

[illegible]



## Chapter 35: Darkness is spreading

A small rough summary of the situation:

Hermione has come to the Elfish world to help with Harry's recovery and was kidnapped as he and Teneb were training with the Xhan and Xhana. She was kept in a cell in a mountain and underwent some mental tortures.

Meanwhile at Hogwarts they are readying for the last battle. After the Halloween attack by several demons, the Elemental masters are teaching all those with the Elemental gift. The former Masters have started teaching, finally coming to grasp with the situation.

The Vampires have agreed to help and have been hiding all the descendants of the Enchanter line to stop Volddemort from performing the ritual to open the Hell's gate.

In the ELfish world, after the Isles debacle where a part of their world nearly went underwater, following Geryan's (a high duke leading a rebellion ) decision to drain the nodes under them to power his attacks and enchantments for the siege of Horevald, Harry and Teneb channelled some power to save them, nearly dieing in the process. They are now helping in the rebuilding, training and trying to convince the ELves, Magis and Elementals to help.

Last time:

*Crouching next to her, he could see that the three days she had spent here had taken their toll on her. She looked dehydrated. She was dirty; her hair was one tangled mess and she sported several cuts and many scratches on her arms, legs and face mostly.*

*"Lady Hermione..."*

*She didn't seem to hear him.*

*Sighing, he waved his hand towards her and caught her as she slumped against the wall.*



*Carrying her in his arms, he made his way outside, a little unsteady on his feet as exhaustion caught up with them.*

*Many soldiers looked at him and the human with pity and a little horror shining in their eyes. One of them stepped forwards.*

*“Prime?”*

*Hysten looked at him with a cool look.*

*“What, Carenyl?”*

*The Elf shifted a little.*

*"I-I can carry her if you wish."*

*Hysten shot him a piercing look.*

*"It is a long way back to the camp, you won't manage it alone."*

*Another soldier stepped forward.*

*"I will help."*

*“And so will I.”*

*“And I.”*

*Several soldiers and members of the Elite volunteered.*

*Throat tightening, Hysten nodded and gently handed the human to Carenyl.*

*Perhaps there was hope for them...*

[illegible]

They slowly walked back to their camp, the soldiers taking turns carrying the young witch.

Jihar met them to the Healing tents.



His face was grim as he saw the state the young woman was in.

“I just received a call from Horevald. The Athars will leave Kahera at noon for Horevald.”

Hysten sighed. He really didn't look forward facing the human Athar and inform him of what had happened.

“What of our captives?”

Jihar smiled darkly.

“They were sent to Renskarn to be hold for interrogation and to wait for their trial.”

Hysten returned his smile.

“Good, now let's go back, the Queen must be waiting for us.”

They oversaw the dismantlement of their camp and left with the last group through a portal leading to Horevald.

They landed in the castle's courtyard and dismissed their men. The human had been sent to the Healing House and all they could do was hope that she wouldn't suffer lasting damages from her ordeal.

They headed for the Strategy room where they knew the Queen would wait for them despite the late hour.

She was sitting in a chair by the window overseeing the gardens, dressed in a simple outfit, a nightdress covering her form.

“You found her, then. How is she?”

Hysten sighed.

“Not well, she was found in an orcalk cell sealed by a Nightmare spiral as well as three minor ones,” stated Jihar. They didn't have time to sugarcoat the situation.

The Queen massaged her temples, her fatigue obvious on her face.



"I assume that you caught those detaining her?"

Hysten nodded.

"They are interrogated at Renskarn as we speak. An Eldoiras, a Deiser and one of our men are supervising the process," he answered.

"Very well, have the conclusions sent to me as soon as possible. What of the human? Will she recover?"

Jihar shrugged.

"I do not know, your Majesty. I have yet to meet with the healers regarding her state. She was... not well when we found her," he added, trying to present the truth as gently as possible.

"You mean that she looked like she went through hell... Three days in a Nightmare spiral... We will be lucky if she comes out of it sane. Find Mind Healers to try to help her. Make sure they are the less prejudiced ones... We do not need her to get more mental scarring than needed."

The Queen shook her head, trying to find a way to get out of this situation.

"Have the Athars sent to me when they get back," she paused thinking something over. "Have Geryan come to see me when the Athars are there. He might learn something out of this debacle..."

Hysten repressed a small smile and nodded, before bowing and leaving the room, hearing the dismissal in the Queen's voice.

Valera crossed her hands and blew on them, trying to warm them. She looked outside and prayed for some peace.

The hours passed and she was shaken awake by one of the maids that had come to clean the room in the morning.

"Your Majesty? Are you feeling unwell?"



Valera blinked a few times trying to remember what she was doing in a chair by the window of her private audience room. As memories came back to her, she slowly stood up, gathering her night-robe around her body.

"I'm fine, Evira, do not worry.

The young maid nodded to her queen.

"Very well my Queen. Do you wish me to come back later?"

"No, no, do not mind me. I'll leave you to your work."

With that she walked out the room as Evira curtsied before her. She headed straight for her rooms and only left an hour later, correctly attired, her hair gathered in a bun on the nape of her neck.

She had still some time left before the Athars would arrive and needed to learn what had transpired from the human's kidnappers' interrogation.

She entered her office and found a folder waiting for her.

Opening it, she started to read through the summary of the culprits' declarations.

Two hours later, she closed the folder and tried to think of a way to right this situation. She knew she had to punish them but how to do so without creating an uprising among her subjects and the two other communities eluded her.

And there was also the matter of the Human world's situation...

A knock was heard on the door and she watch as her son entered.

She felt a swell of pride rise in her as she looked over Celen. Even though the past months had been difficult he had kept his head high, even after his father's treason and death.

"Mother? Are you well?"

Valera nodded tiredly.



"I will be, Celen. How are you?"

"As fine as can be expected," he answered, taking a seat in front of her. "Do you think she will recover?"

"I do not know... I'm waiting for the Athars to be back. They might be able to help with her ailment."

Celen looked at his hands as silence fell on the room.

"I might not like the humans as a whole that much and find them dangerous; but nobody should have to suffer through this... She looked so broken, Mother."

Valera stood up and went to place her hands over her son's shoulders.

"Do you need to talk about it, Celen?"

The young elf shook his head.

"No, at least not now, I need some time. Everything is a bit jumbled for now." Celen looked at her, his eyes conveying the turmoil that was unsettling him better than words could have.

Valera sighed.

"Will you accompany me for a walk through the gardens, son?"

Celen nodded gratefully.

"I would love to, Mother."

The two elves left the room and wandered through the garden, relishing in a small moment of peace shared between mother and son.

By noon, they parted. Celen went to eat with Djaryle and a few other friends of his while his mother went to eat with a few of her counselors in the Winter-room.

They were discussing some of the laws Valera wanted to implement as soon as possible when a soft knocking interrupted them.



They looked up as a servant introduced the two youths they had been waiting for.

“Your Majesty, Counselors, the Athars are there.”

“Please send them in.”

“Yes, you Majesty.” The young elf bowed and left, coming back followed by the two young men.

Valera immediately spotted the difference. Not that it was difficult, everything in them screamed powerful.

She had known Teneb since his birth and considered him as a surrogate nephew. She had known he was powerful even given Elfish standard but the magic rolling around him was unsettling her.

He had not changed much spare a few silver hairs and way he carried himself. But if the power surrounding him was unsettling, the one surrounding the human was bordering on terrifying.

“Athars, I hope your stay at the Temple was profitable.”

Harry and Teneb nodded, bowing to her.

“Indeed it was, your Majesty.”

Valera repressed a roll of eyes.

“Take a seat please.”

They sat down and declined the drinks offered to them.

“I’m afraid I don’t have good news to give you, Athars.”

Harry sent her an inquisitive look, his green eyes boring in her soul.

Pendragon’s eyes.

Now she understood what the legend was talking about.

“What do you mean, your Majesty?”



"Your friend, Hermione, was abducted a few days ago by Rogue members of Geryan's troops."

Harry made to stand up but was halted by Valera's raised hand.

"Please Athar. We managed to get her back and capture her abductors. However, she spent those days in a Nightmare spiral coupled with leeching, dementia and anchoring spirals, sealed in an orcalk cell.

Harry slumped in his chair, face blank, internally blaming himself.

"How is she, Your Majesty?" asked Teneb, deciding that formality was more suited to the situation.

Valera stood up.

"I was waiting for your return before going to see her. Counselors if you will excuse us."

The three of them nodded to the counselors before heading to the Healing House.

The walk was a silent one. Harry was trying to think of what he could have done to prevent this and Teneb trying to think clearly while keeping the guilt coming from his blood-brother at bay.

*"Harry, please, try to think clearly about this! There was nothing you could have done that would have changed things!"*

*"She came here because of me, Teneb."*

*"And she chose to stay here when you got better. Do not make yourself the cause of everything because you're not."*

Harry nodded discretely to him and the pressure on Teneb's shields lightened.

They finally reached the Healing House.

Valera entered and got an apprentice to lead them to where Hermione was being treated.



Harry sat on her bed, and gently pushed a stray lock of hair out of her face. She was pale, her face twisted in a pained expression as she shifted in her bed, mumbling in her drug induced sleep.

He turned to look at the Healer that had joined them.

He was an aged Earth Elemental with long dark green hair tied in a low ponytail. His hazel eyes went over Harry and the others.

From the expression on Teneb's face, this was not your everyday Healer.

"Master Mind Healer Orian... It's an honor I thought you retired."

"I did, Athar, but Ianthyl contacted me given the peculiarities of this case and its gravity."

Harry cut them.

"I apologize for my rudeness, Mind Healer, but I would like to know how my friend is and what can be done to help her."

Orian sent him a tight smile.

"I assume you are the human Athar."

Harry nodded and gave the aged Elemental a small bow.

"I am, Mind Healer. However I think that time is not to pleasantries or small talk."

Orian smiled.

"Indeed Athar. Well said."

He stepped closer to Hermione's bed.

"Your friend was caught in a Nightmare spiral. Despite the relatively short time she was submitted to this torture, the effects were amplified by the smaller spirals that anchored its effects and drained her of energy to fight against the Nightmare spiral. Being a human, her shields weren't adapted to fight the spell of the Spiral."



Harry nodded, taking everything in.

“She retreated in the deepest level of her subconscious to protect her inner being in a survival instinct. However the spiral left many scars behind and might have corrupted some of her memories.”

“So, what can you do to help her,” asked Harry, impatiently.

“We first stabilized her mind and have started to repair the tears in her mind and her shields as well as working on the locks that the spiral placed on her positive memories.” He paused slightly, looking at Harry. “I would need to see some positive memories of yours involving your friend, Athar. It would help reinforce the truth to her mind.”

Harry nodded, his reluctance at having someone enter his mind outweighed by his concern for Hermione.

“Once this is over, we will start trying to draw her out of her subconscious and make her realize the reality as opposed to the lies showed by the spiral. It will be difficult work but she has a chance to come through.”

He looked around, his hazel unforgiving.

“Any positive presence during the sessions will be welcomed. I can assure you that all those involved in her treatment will not carry any prejudice against her that might set her back.”

Harry sighed slowly.

“Very well, Mind-healer, I will trust you with her health. I will be at your disposition should you need me.”

Orian nodded.

“Thank you Athar, if it is possible, I would like to see you tomorrow to extract some of your memories to help with her therapy would noon be agreeable to you?”

Harry nodded.



“I will be there.”

There was a soft knocking and an apprentice entered followed by an elf familiar to all of those present.

“Geryan,” stated, Valera, her voice cold.

“Your Majesty, you asked for my presence?”

“Indeed, Geryan. You specialized into mind Arts, didn’t you?”

“I did.” The High Duke frowned, not seeing where the conversation was going.

“Very well, then I have a case that requires your expertise, Geryan.” She pointed to the bed, motioning to those hiding Hermione from Geryan’s view.

The widening of the elf’s eyes was the only outward sign of his surprise.

Cautiously, he walked closer to her and placed his hand over her forehead.

“A Nightmare spiral... linked through some minors ones...”

Hermione started to shift in the bed, his face scrunching in a pained expression as she shook it as if trying to keep something at bay.

Geryan immediately backed off.

“She’s reacting to my magical signature. I assume you found her in the orcalk mines I told you about?”

Valera nodded slightly.

“I was part of those that created the wards over the different hide-outs in the mines. My magical signature must be part of them and she must have assimilated it to her ordeal... The tears in her minds are being repaired as we speak. I assume the healers are going to start on her positive reinforcement therapy.”



Orian nodded.

“Indeed.”

“You’d better start with memory that aren’t tied at all with magic... they are those less likely to provoke a reaction. It was said that friendly and reassuring presence helped heal patients in that state in recent studies, as well as the use of lavender and mint oils to appease and renew the soul.”

Orian looked thoughtful.

“I will look into this, High Duke, thank you for your input.”

Geryan bowed respectfully before looking at the Queen.

“Majesty, we might never agree on some points, however I will never condone torture. I do hope the culprits were caught and will be punished accordingly.”

“They will be judged by our courts and will face whatever penalties the court will give them.”

Geryan pursed his lips.

“I do hope you’ll insure the impartiality of the court, your Majesty. I will at your disposition to testify if you want me to.”

Valera nodded pensively.

“I will keep you apprised of the situation,”

“Then, if your Majesty permits, I will take my leave for I have several matters to deal with.”

Valera motioned to him to go as she looked at the Athars.

“Will you exact revenge on her kidnappers, Athars?” she asked looking pointedly at Harry.

Harry took a deep breath.



“You will have to thank the Xhan, Xhana and my guardian for my restraint.” He paused, calming himself and his magic who wanted to lash out at those responsible for Hermione’s torture. “As long as justice is served, I will not act against them.”

Teneb placed a hand on his shoulder and squeezed it once in comfort. Harry sent him a grateful smile before turning to the healer.

“Am I allowed to come see her?”

Orian immediately agreed.

“Of course and the more you’ll be able to come, the better it will be for her.”

Harry leaned on Hermione’s prone form and gently kissed her forehead.

“Sleep and heal, Hermione. I will be back later.”

He then straightened himself and followed the others out of the Healing wings and to the Royal Family’s quarters.

Celen, Djaryle, Kobalt, Opheria and Teneb’s family were waiting for them there.

Harry watched with a small smile as Teneb was run over by his sister. Delia squealed as her brother twirled her around. Harry could see Teneb would be busy when she would be in age to be courted...

He bowed to Doryan and kissed Ysela’s hand, greeting them.

“We are glad to see you well, Harry,” said Ysela, smiling at her son’s blood brother. “We were all worried for you.”

Harry thanked them for their concern before going to Celen, not really knowing how to greet the Elf Prince. Celen seemed to pick on his hesitation and made the first move, clasping his forearm.

“Glad to have you back with us, Harry.”



“Thank you, My... Celen.” He corrected, seeing the prince glare.  
“Thank you for sending help to my world.”

Celen shrugged.

“I just fulfilled my promise. If you must thank someone, thank Kobalt and Opheria. They were the ones to go to your world.”

Harry turned to his and Teneb’s Seconds and bowed to them, his right hand over his heart.

“My thanks to you both.”

Kobalt and Opheria simply returned the gesture with a smile.

“You don’t have to thank us. Your people fought well by themselves. They were also helped by the Vampires and the Goblins. We would have never been able to win had it not been for their help. Those Demons were Third rank...” said Kobalt.

Meanwhile, Celen and Teneb had sat down together and were talking quietly among themselves. Harry decided to leave them be and turned his attention back to Kobalt and Opheria, Djaryle watching them from her chair.

Harry slowly relaxed. After some time, he felt his sleeves being tugged.

Looking down, he spotted the young Delia.

“Look, I took care of both them!”

She proudly showed him the two small animated figurines he and Teneb had created for her when they had arrived at Horevald.

He smiled at her.

“That’s very good, Delia. Would you like to learn a small trick?”

The young elf nodded eagerly.



Harry stood up and showed her to a corner, sitting on the ground, Delia settling in front of him. Quietly, he directed her through the simple motion of the little trick he wanted to teach her.

For the following hours, calm reigned in the room as Harry entertained Delia while the other discussed quietly of safe topics, staying clear of the varied issues that had still to be solved.

A servant came to announce that dinner would be served soon. All of them straightened up and headed to the Dining Room in small groups.

Harry was walking with Opheria and Kobalt.

“How are the Isles?”

Opheria smiled.

“The Isles are stable, the power flows were restored and except for a small shake, the situation is improving daily.”

“What about the rebuilding?”

This time it was Kobalt that answered.

“Two wings, two phalanxes of soldiers and two teams of healers are still stationed there to help the islanders and protect them from several magical creatures that were either mutated or driven crazy by the power loss. The wounded are slowly returning home to help their community get back to its feet.”

“Whose wings?”

“Moral’s and Oceal’s.”

Harry nodded.

“I’ll go check on the nodes to make sure they are completely stable and that the power flows haven’t been damaged that much.”

“Will Teneb go with you?”

Harry shrugged.



"It will be for him to decide."

*"Count on me, Harry, I would like to see our handiwork too. After all, we put our life on the line for those Isles."*

Harry smiled, glad to feel that their mental bond was still strong. With everything that had happened and the numerous shifts in their core, he had feared their bond would have been nullified.

As if sensing his thoughts, Teneb sent a mental chuckle his way.

*"There is little that can break a Blood-brother bond, brother mine, save our wills or death."*

Harry rolled his eyes and brought his attention back to Kobalt and Opheria.

Dinner was a quiet but for the first time of Harry's stay in the Elvish world, it was comfortable. The next week passed quickly.

Valera and Celen were busy dealings with the various clans and factions hounding them about their decisions or what they felt the two royals should do. After having gone to the Isles to check on the node and fulfill his promise to the snakes there, Harry parted his time between being at Hermione bedside, practicing with Teneb, continuing the classes Hermione had taught and helping Teneb with Demenor as to the help the Riders could provide as well as the training they should go through.

It was also then that Harry learnt of another role of what being an Athar meant.

Both Teneb and he had been called back to the Headquarters to help with several Dragons that had suddenly fallen ill, despite the Healer's effort to help. Not even their riders understood what was happening.

Athars had a keener connection to the Dragons than the other riders, however not even the past Athars still present at the Headquarters could understand what was going on.

Harry knelt next to the iridescent head of the Dawnris.



She had been one of the first to fall to this ailment and her health was quickly spiraling down. Seven more dragons: a Dusker, two Quears, a Dewat and Two other Dawnris were ill and an Azurean was looking like he had been contaminated by whatever was harming the Dragons. Some of their riders had to be sedated as their Dragons' state had unsettled them a great deal.

Harry shook his head and focused on the mighty beast next to him.

Gently, he placed a hand on her forehead, concentrating on her magic as they had excluded most of the other possible cause of illness, not that the Magical Dragons were prone to illness to start with.

Drawing on his own magic, he closed his eyes, only to open them a minute later, ignoring the movement of recoil from those around him as he knew his mark was glowing, his silver strands standing out more than usual and that his eyes must have turned completely silver and he used Magical sight, a trick the Xhan and Xhana had taught Teneb and himself.

He could see the magic in the Dragon. It made most of its being and was vital to its survival. He could see another magical entity growing in the Dawnris. Following the magical path around her body, he frowned slightly before shifting his gaze to the Azurean standing next to its mate as the two Dragons had mated recently.

It confirmed his finding. Going deeper, he reached the inner core of the Dragon and had to stop for a minute to get used to highly powerful magic surrounding him. It was intoxicating. Then he saw it.

Like a leech, a gross mass was throbbing among the core, obviously feeding on the Dragon own inner power, draining it slowly but surely of his life.

Approaching the mass, he watched surprised as it stopped its feeding, shimmering, and trying to melt in the magic around it to go unnoticed. Had Harry not been focused on it, he would have overlooked the faint shimmer in front of him.



Remaining absolutely still, and cloaking his own presence, Harry watched as the mass reappeared once more and started feeding again.

*/What is this horror!/* Rexeran's deep mental voice echoed in his mind, disgust palpable in his tone.

*/I would like to know... whatever it is, it will kill her if we do not do something/* sighed Harry.

Shielding his presence as Xhan Cyan had showed him, he drew closer to try to find from where this thing was coming. Sending a light probe, he saw the mass freeze and shimmer out of existence once more.

However Harry knew what he needed. Gently he withdrew from the Dawris magic.

Rexeran had appeared in the Healing rings used to patch up the dragons injured in fights.

Harry closed his eyes and let go of his magic. Opening his eyes, he blinked and found worried and impatient faces looking at him. Turning to look at Teneb, he saw that he was withdrawing from the Quear and would be back in a minute.

"I think I have an idea of what is going on. I'll wait for Teneb so we can share our findings," he said wearily.

Demenor nodded and motioned to the riders at his side to calm down.

*/It is the planes, isn't it, Rexeran?/*

The Sowaroc let out a low growl.

*/I share your opinion, Astyan. However all the dragons have been told not to use the plans and shield from them. Even for those whose bond was frozen, the taint should not have touched us yet, unless it is darker and deeper than we thought and started to reach the third plane./*



*/I will have to go there to assess the damage./*

*/No, you can't!/*

Rexeran panic inundated Harry.

*/What is going Rexeran. I will need to go to the plane if I want to understand what is going on and try to help the Dragons./*

*/You must not! It is too dangerous!/*

*/How? I will use all the protection I need./*

*/You don't understand Astyan. This taint, it's like a disease. It spreads to everything that links to the planes, worms its way into their core and drain them dry to sustain itself. The moment you will reach the plan, you will be open to an attack and through you, they would reach immense reserves of power!/*

*/It won't be able to drain me if I shield myself./*

*/No shield save a protective circle will protect you. /*

*/Then I will have one gathered!* snapped Harry, determined.

Rexeran seemed to sense his stubbornness and gave in.

*/It was always useless to try to make you change your mind, Astyan. But I urge you to be careful. The plans are dangerous./*

*/I will be prudent, Rexeran. But I have to try to help those dragons./*

*/I understand that need, Astyan. However you are too important to risk your life or sanity carelessly./*

Harry chose not to ask about those words, having bigger fish to fry for now. Teneb chose that moment to exit his trance and looked for Harry.

"It's the planes, isn't it Harry?"

Harry nodded.



"I think so, so does Rexeran."

Demenor frowned.

"What do you mean? What about the planes? All the dragons have forbidden everyone to access them and everyone was asked to stay clear of them by their spirit guides."

Harry raked a hand in his hair.

"The planes were being tainted by whatever ritual Voldemort and Luctan were preparing. My spirit guardian forbade me from going to them anymore as it was too dangerous."

A tall man with the typical appearance of a Fire-Elemental spoke up.

"What is going then?! Why is Sora so ill?!"

Teneb decided to answer.

"From what I could see on Quy, the taint is going deeper than our guardians thought and has managed to reach the Dragons."

From the frowns on most of the face looking at Teneb and him, Harry gathered that they didn't quite understand.

"What Teneb means is that this taint is leeching the Dragon Magic to feed itself and spread further. Your Dragons are dieing because their magic is being drained away."

Fire erupted from the rider's skin, making people take a step back. Harry had no time to waste for outburst though and quickly snuffed the flames out.

"We don't have time for your anger, rider Wean. You should focus your energy on Sora to help her and her dragonet."

Wean looked at him stunned before hurrying to Sora's side, gently petting the iridescent scales.

"What will happen to our Dragons?" asked the rider of the Quear, a lithe Magis woman.



*/Rider Brynne/* supplied Rexeran.

“First we need to know what is going on the plans, rider Brynne.”

The rider’s face lightened and Harry saw the tell-tale sign of the beginning of a trance. He did not think and acted. Waving his hand, he blasted her straight in a pile of hay.

Immediately other riders shouted in anger but were silenced by the crackling magic surrounding Harry, his eyes darkened in anger.

“SILENCE!” shouted Demenor. “Athar- ” He was cut by Harry who glared at Brynne.

“Did you not listen to me! Didn’t I say how dangerous the plans were now! Do you know what would have happened had you reached the First plane?! This taint would have spread through you. It would have drained you dry in a matter of minutes!”

“But...”

“The only way I will try to go to the plan will be through a protective circle of five to shield me.”

*/Calm down Harry, he’s just worried... /*

Teneb placed an arm on Harry’s shoulder, calming through their Brother bond.

“Rexeran and Gae will call on other dragons and place the dragons being drained on a stasis. This will freeze all magic until we find a way to help them.” He paused and looked at Demenor.

“I’ll leave you to arrange for a circle to be gathered. It would be better is Harry is the one to try since human minds are not as susceptible to mind Arts as Elvish ones. I will be one of the anchors. You need to find four more, open-minded enough to be able to focus on Harry and shield him. We will both take care of the circle’s set up.”

“Where will you set it up?” asked Demenor, mentally going through names of potential candidates through his mind.



“In Darkana. It is the safest place around here and its power will be an added bonus,” explained Teneb, brushing away dirt from his tunic. “We’ll set up the circle, be ready in two hours.”

Demenor nodded and watched as the two youths headed towards Darkana. He looked at those present, in particular the other Athars.

“I’ll call for Lyrom and Yranne from the Temple and I’d like you Questra and you Niom to help them if you feel you will be able to do it.”

A small thief-like built elf, with a scar marring his right cheek, shot a look at a tall dark skinned Earth Elemental woman.

“Why us?”

Demenor sighed.

“Both of you are Athars, so Darkana will be able to help you more easily and both of you are specialized in Mind Arts while Lyrom and Yranne are more skilled at Magic Manipulation.”

“Questra?” Niom asked, expectantly.

The woman gave a slight tilt of her head.

“I will do it.”

Demenor thanked them before leaving to call for Lyrom and Yranne.

Rexeran eyed the two Athars.

*/I want to warn you both, Athars. Teneb and Harry are important to our races. There is much more at stake than the lives of dragons. I will not allow them to come to any harm. Consider yourself warned. /*

Questra bowed before the Sowaroc.

“I heard and will heed your warning, mighty Sowaroc. Know that I have no ill-thought towards your bonded. Like him I wish to help the Dragons.”



Rexeran let out a snort with a small cloud of smoke.

*/Then you should ready yourselves, Athars, I would advise some meditating and anchoring. You will need to be as strong as you can be for this to work. /*

Questra and Niom bowed before him then left for Darkana to ready themselves while Demenor went to call for the Deiser and Doija.

Two hours later found most of them in one of the more shielded room of Darkana. Harry and Teneb were adding the finishing touches to their set up which was composed of intricate circles within circles, runes spread around at a seemingly random pattern. Chalk, wax, blood and ashes were used to draw and as the different participants took their place, they were careful not to disrupt the lines or runes.

Harry and Teneb had discarded the classical pentagram formation as Harry didn't trust all of them not to hold back.

Questra, Niom, Lyrom and Yranne, both of the latter dressed in full Deiser and Doija regalia, were placed on a half-circle, with Teneb as their center. He would channel them and anchor Harry, shielding him through their combined power.

Demenor was overseeing them from the viewing room.

As they concentrated, the room started to hum with magic, Darkana adding her own weight to protect her Athars...

However Harry noticed nothing of it as he let himself fall in a trance, feeling the presence of the others surrounding him protectively.

As he finally reached the first plane, he nearly recoiled in shock. He was caught in a dark grey thick fog. It was oppressing weighting on him.

Concentrating, he tried to shift the plane's landscape to no avail. None of the spirits or guardians which were usually roaming the plane could be seen.



The plane was unnaturally still. Ill at ease, Harry started to move through the plane, not able to shake off the feeling of being slowly surrounded.

Drawing on his own power he spread his senses to try to get a feel of what was going on.

He nearly recoiled in horror as the fog seemed to thicken around him and coil like tendrils of smoke started to run up his legs ensnaring him.

Yelping he jumped away as the burning sensation the tendrils left in their wake. Deciding not to spend one more second than what was needed on the plane, now understanding what his guardian had meant when he had forbidden him to come back, he focused once more and spread his senses once more, ignoring the burning sensations of the smoke. He had to understand what was causing this. Shifting to magical sight easily as he was on the plane, he was able to see a giant pool of wild roaring dark power.

He shuddered at the evil reeking from the magic. He had felt true Dark Magic while studying under Terio. The dwarf had shown him several weapons that had been infused with Dark Magic making them extremely powerful and destructive.

He had had Harry wield them, despite the young man protests.

Terio had quickly shut him, snapping that Dark was not evil. It was just a branch of magic that was more wild and prone to be used for destruction, having an affinity for chaos while Light magic preferred to be used for order... He had tested a sword, a bow, a crossbow, darts, throwing stars, knives and finally a pair of daggers. Reluctant at first, he quickly discarded the sword, darts, knives and the bow. However, he took to the stars and daggers. Terio had gifted him the set. While they did not feel as natural as his personal set of weapons, they were extremely effective. He had never used them except for training as the magic they contained was quite wild and responded well to intent. The daggers were poisoned and could act as conduct for Dark Magic should he decide to use it.

However, this wasn't dark. It was pure evil. The pool was growing steadily and large tendrils were spreading round tainting the plane.



He saw three tree-like tendrils shooting upwards and shimmering out of view and knew that the soul plane had been tainted as well. Focusing on the pool, he tried to get a feel of the magical signature.

Things went so fast, that Harry hadn't time to react. As soon as his power probed the pool of power, it reared up and shot at him, drowning him in its depths.

Harry felt tendrils of magic coiling around his legs and arms tugging him around. Struggling to free himself, he started to panic when he felt his own power being drawn.

***TENEB !***

His last thought before blacking out as pain worse than ten Cruciatus at once shot through him, was that at least he got what he wanted as to who or what was behind this taint.

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Teneb was feeling Harry's unease that kept growing as he looked through the plane. Even through Harry he could feel the taint that permeated the Spirit plane. Suddenly there was a deep fear that struck him before Harry cried out in his mind.

***TENEB!***

Eyes widening, he watched as Harry's body slumped to the ground, twitching slightly.

Immediately, he started to chant and drew on the power of the circle, calling on all the participants, weaving a protective shield around Harry's spirit quickly as he felt his friend's strength decrease.

Focusing all the power he felt thrumming under his fingers, he sent it to surround his fellow Athar. He could feel resistance against his magic and drew on Darkana to help them. Slowly as if swimming through mud, he felt the power he had sent to reinforce the shield they had originally set up.



Finally he felt the resistance give and the shield flare, cutting Harry from whatever had been hurting him.

Harry's body stopped moving and Teneb rushed to his blood brother's side.

"Harry?! Harry!"

He shook him lightly.

Green eyes opened and looked at him, slightly unfocused.

"*Harry?*" asked Teneb, deciding that mental-speech might be easier on his friend.

"... *'neb*"

"*What happened?!*"

"... *'ired*"

Harry's eyes closed as his breath evened.

"He's only drained. He will be alright once he will have rested," said Yranne who had crouched next to Teneb and scanned Harry.

"How long?" asked Teneb.

Yranne shrugged.

"I can't say for sure. I would say at least a day given how low is energy levels are."

"We can't wait that long," stated Demenor who had joined them. "We must know what is going on!"

Yranne shot him a withering look.

"His magic is replenishing itself faster than I have ever seen already, I can't do anything more. He will wake up when his body allows it."



Meanwhile, Teneb had grasped Harry's forearm and started speaking his Blood Brotherhood pledge.

"Ilan ory sianter" (United by mind)  
"Ilan ory saroll" (United by soul)

His forearm and Harry's were surrounded by a soft golden glow which quickly spread to Harry's whole body.

"Desen hela athia" (Death or life)  
"Lith tarx jomi" (linked through all).

The glow slowly subsided, both of the blood-brother mark glowing one more time before going back to their scar aspect.

Teneb placed both hands on the floor, feeling faint.

"Teneb? Are you alright?" inquired Questra, having noticed the young elf growing pale, a thin coat of sweat covering him, his breathing coming out ragged as if he had run for hours.

That got the attention of the others that turned to look at him.

Yranne immediately went to him, scanning him as she did so.

"Demenor, are they Blood brothers?"

The older elf frowned.

"What does it had to do with this?"

Yranne glared.

"Everything! Now, are they or not?!"

Teneb shook his head slightly.

"I- We are... brothers."

Yranne's demeanor softened.

"You called on your bond, didn't you?"



Teneb could only nod making the Doija sigh quietly. She placed both her hands on each side of his head.

“Sleep and rest youngling, I will guard your dreams.”

“But-...”

“Sleep,” she said softly, using her own power to induce his rest.

She went to Harry’s side and checked on him, smiling a little at her readings.

She turned to look at Demenor.

“Teneb used his own link to young Harry and shared his own power to boost his recovery. They should be both awake in three hours.”

The leader of the Headquarters nodded, having no choice in the matter.

Yranne smoothen her robes and turned to Lyom then Demenor.

“If you do not require our assistance any longer, Rider, we need to return to the temples to warn our superior of this. We will ask you to tell the Athar that the Xhan and Xhana would like to be informed of their findings.”

The elf smiled a little.

“I will see that the Athars hear of this, Yranne.”

That said, Yranne drew up her hood, followed by Lyom, both their faces hidden from view.

Only those that had purified at one of the temple were allowed to see their faces, meaning all the members of the temples, the riders, most of the mages, scholars and a few high ranking member of the royal army.

Demenor and Niom bent down and picked the two Athars, carrying them to a chamber close by and resting them on two beds before leaving, Questra and Niom flying back to the Headquarters to check



on the ill Dragons, Demenor to a warded room to make a call to Horevald to warn the Queen of what was going and have her scholars and researchers look at what might be going on.

Three hours later, he sent some people to go see how the Athars were and bring them to the communication room. He had to wait about half an hour before they entered the room. Both of them still looked quite tired, and Demenor wished he could have let them rest. However it was not to be.

“Harry, Teneb.”

The two youth nodded tiredly and took a seat at the table.

“What happened?” asked Harry, raking a hand in his black locks, tugging on a few knots.

“Well after you fell unconscious and Teneb helped you along, the Doija put you to sleep. They requested you to contact the Xhan and the Xhana at the earliest convenience.”

Teneb closed his eyes and sighed.

“We will do so once we’re done there... Have you been able to talk with the Queen?”

Demenor nodded.

“I was, she set all her scholars on this but was waiting for you to wake up to supply some more information.”

As he explained this, he tapped a few crystals before placing his hand over the largest one in the center of the table.

Harry could feel the power running between the different crystals and watched impressed as a ray of light shot up and unfolded like a large fan, revealing several people.

“Demenor?”

“My Queen. The Athars are here.”



“Good, Teneb, Harry, we all hope you’ll be able to clarify this situation. You already know Reald, Halan, one of the Magis Elder, Kesle, My Prime Herald, Geryan and Faeral, the representative of the Afiwea.”

*"The Elemental Council"* mentally supplied Teneb.

Harry nodded.

“Pleased to meet you all,” he stated, echoed by his friend.

Valera smiled tightly at them.

“I think we’ll forego the pleasantries, Athars, can you explain us the situation?”

Harry massaged his right temple.

“Alright, after checking on the dragons, I knew that something was draining their magic and life force. I scanned them further and could see that whatever was going had something to do with the planes and the fact that my spirit guardian and Teneb’s had forbade us to go back to the planes, warning us that something was spreading there and tainting it.”

A few people on the Queen’s side started to talk in hushed whispers.

“I decided to check on the Spirit Plane by myself protected a circle of five. Doija Yranne, Deiser Lyom, Athars Qestra and Niom as well as Teneb were part of it.”

He paused, collecting his thoughts.

“I reached the plane. It seemed dead, filled with some kind of fog that coiled itself around you and burnt. I shifted to Magical sight and noticed that this ... fog seemed to come from a huge pool if I can say so of power that was shooting three spires upwards to the soul plane. I can only assume that the soul plane has been tainted too and through it the third plane which could explain why Dragons are being affected.”

He stopped, trying to stop the slight trembling of his hands.



“I probed it to get the magic’s signature. As soon as I did so, it attacked me and would have managed to annihilate my spirit and drain my magic had Teneb and the others not been there. He called on the circle power and managed to bring me back. He then used our blood-brother bond to share some of his power with me.”

Silence followed his words. As what he explained started to sink in, he saw the faces of the ones sitting by the Queen pale.

“Did you get the Magical signature of this taint, Athar?”

Harry nodded.

“I did, however, I would prefer that you looked at it by yourself. If what I think I sensed is true, you won’t believe me without sensing it by yourself first.”

The Fire Elemental raised an eyebrow.

“And how can we be sure that you won’t tamper with the memory of what you sensed.”

“I hope that my oath as a rider will be enough. However I suspect that it won’t. Then I hope that having Demenor extract the memory from my mind and send it to you will be enough to ensure my truthfulness, Representative Faeral.”

The Elemental nodded curtly.

“It will, Athar.”

Harry nodded to Demenor. He felt a light probe to his outer shields. Gently, he felt the presence seek the memory of what he had experienced on the plane, ignoring everything else, not that Harry would have allowed the elf to snoop around without retribution.

Demenor nodded to Harry as he withdrew from the human’s mind. A silver thread came out of Harry’s temple and was directed by Demenor towards the main stone.



Everyone watched as the memory played out for all to see, being able to feel everything Harry had.

A few recoiled in shock upon seeing the swarming magic tainting the planes.

Reald was pale as a ghost as was Halan. Kesle and Geryan's faces had turned to stone. Faeral seemed shocked and horrified, too young by Elf terms to understand what the others could.

"Luctan," whispered Halan, "but how?"

Reald turned to Harry.

"There is a second signature... I've already felt it while in your world... It's that Dark Lord warring in your world, isn't it?"

Harry nodded.

"That's what I felt. I wasn't sure about the second signature, having only felt it once beforehand."

Faeral turned wide eyes to Halan.

"You mean that Luctan is back?!"

Halan frowned.

"I sent you a messenger to warn you of his return."

"We thought you weren't serious! He was Banished! How could he have been brought back?"

Halan's lips tightened with annoyance.

"Everything was explained in the message I sent the Afiwea."

Faeral snorted.

"How could you expect us to believe that a mere human had brought back the Dark one? It was ludicrous!"



Harry rolled his eyes, drawing an amused smile from Teneb.

Valera raised her hand.

“We are not here to cast blame; I assume that one of the power signature is from Luctan and the other from that human Dark Lord.”

Reald nodded.

“Indeed, but it shouldn’t have been possible.”

Valera frowned.

“Explain yourself, please.”

Reald nodded.

“As you are all aware, I and most of the scholars in Horevald researched in depth the ritual this Dark Lord wanted to perform.”

Kesle cut him.

“What was this ritual, Prince Reald?”

Reald sighed.

“This Voldemort came by Djaira’s journal and managed to translate it.”

Kesle nodded grimly.

“The Hell’s Gates opening. I assume steps were taken to prevent this from happening.”

A look of annoyance crossed Reald’s face at Kesle patronizing tone.

“We studied this ritual in depths, Prime Herald. It was next to impossible for him to complete it. Without Luctan’s blood and the blood from the human Enchanter’s line, he can’t perform this ritual!”

Kesle looked back at the frozen memory.



“Given this taint, I would say he is quite close of completing it, Reald.”

“But how could he get the blood?” asked Valera.

Halan sighed.

“If that human managed to bring back Luctan and give him a body, then he most probably has got some of his blood. As to the human blood, are you sure that he couldn’t trace back the Enchanter’s descendants?”

Reald shrugged.

“The Enchanter lived millennia ago when all the races where still cohabitating. After the Parting, we did not bother tracking his descendant. Maybe those of Ynris might know more since they remained in contact with the human world for longer than most of us.”

Valera shook her head.

“Even we cut all contacts from the human world. The Enchanter’s line was followed until about one millennia and a half ago. Since then they were lost through time. Given the short life span of human and how fast they can reproduce, they might be anywhere.”

Harry cleared his throat and all eyes turned to him.

“Despite Prince Reald’s reassurance, I looked into the Enchanter’s line. The Diary the Queen Valera gifted me allowed me to know what had become of the Enchanter’s heirs until Pendragon’s time. To sum up a long story, sixteen human lines descend from Him. Six of them ended during the Middle-Ages, three modified their names and were lost. Seven lines are still alive in the human worlds. All of them carry the Enchanter blood, no matter how diluted it is.”

Geryan frowned.

“Does this human know of them?”

Harry shook his head.



“I don’t think so, but it only a matter of time before he does. And then if he kills enough people he might be able to obtain undiluted Enchanter blood,” stated Harry. He had no illusion about this. Voldemort had enough materials and access to knowledge to be able to trace back the different lines given time. It was not a matter of if but of when. Harry could only hope that Adrien and his companions had managed to spirit everyone out of the Dark Lord’s clutches.

Geryan snorted.

“Then we need to make sure that he will never find them, even if it means bringing those lines there or killing them.”

Several startled looks were shot his way.

He rolled his eyes.

“I do not like humans more than I did before, but between having to suffer through their presence and having this ritual completed, I’ll take the lesser of those evils.”

Harry smirked.

“You won’t have to suffer more human presence, High Duke. I was approached by Adrien of the Vampires and he told me his people were hiding all those carrying Enchanter blood. They do not want Voldemort to complete this ritual anymore than us.”

He chose to ignore the appalled looks that met him as he spoke of the Vampires.

Valera was the first to shake off the shock.

“Well, then, if you could make sure that they will stay hidden until we can find a way to stop this ritual...”

Harry bowed his head.

“I will do so.”

Halan spoke up.



“I’ll have some of my mages try to locate the origin of this magic.”

Teneb looked bewildered.

“I did not think you could sense magic beyond the veil.”

Halan shot him a benign smile.

“One Magis alone wouldn’t, however a circle of seven should manage.”

Harry nodded at him.

“It would be most helpful. I will provide you with maps of the human worlds if you need them.”

“It would be most helpful indeed,” stated Halan, “I can only assume that the lands’ configuration changed since we were last in contact...”

“It did,” confirmed Harry. “I will have it brought to you as soon as possible.”

Valera smiled gratefully at him before speaking up.

“Does anyone have something to add? No? Athars you will be back to Horevald soon?”

“We should be there by noon tomorrow,” answered Teneb.

“Very good, we’ll speak of this further then.”

The communication closed down. Sighing, Harry slumped in his chair, rubbing his temples.

“Painful?”

“No,” he shook his head a little, wary of worsening his headache, “well nothing a good night of rest won’t cure.”

Teneb sighed, I’ll follow you on that. I feel positively beat...”

Demenor repressed a small smile.



“Go rest, Athars, I’ll handle the riders of those Dragons that were touched by this taint.”

The two youths stood up and bidding Demenor good evening, they left for their respective rooms in Darkana. As Harry looked through his bag, he was thinking of way to warn the Vampires of what he had learnt. They had to make sure all the families were kept hidden. Voldemort couldn’t be allowed to get to them.

However he had no mean to contact them.

Hedwig was being cared by Hagrid and he didn’t know of other ways to contact someone he didn’t the location. Then he spotted Terio’s gift and smiled. He took the pendant in his hand and opened it, watching as the flame flew out. It gave out a definitively disgruntled feeling of having being kept inside for so long.

“Terio” Harry called out. The flame wavered a little.

“Who is it?” asked a gruff voice, annoyed.

“Terio? It’s Harry...”

“So you finally remembered me?” Harry winced at the reproach hidden in the question.

“Terio, I... I’m sorry, I should have called you sooner.”

“You should have. Even if our sources tell that that you have been quite busy when you were not in a comatose state, you could have find some time to speak with me.”

Harry sighed.

“I’m sorry... I had so many things on my mind that I just didn’t think...”

“Yes, from what your guardian told me you’re not one for thinking much before diving head on.”

Harry blushed.

“I’m not- ”



“You’re impulsive like most humans...It must be because of your lifespan. It’s so short it doesn’t leave much time to thinking. However I heard that fault tended to disappear with time.”

Harry repressed a snort but knew better than to reply.

“How are you, Terio?”

The dwarf let out a sharp laugh.

“I should be the one to ask you this. This was a nasty business in the Isles and we were evacuating our population when you managed to stabilize the nodes. How did you do it?”

Harry fingered his silver bangs.

“Teneb and I channeled Darkana’s power while the Xhan and Xhana channeled their temples’ power. We managed to fill the nodes enough to get the power flows there stable.”

There a small silence.

“Of all the stupid things to do!!”

Harry took a step back, his ears ringing.

“Terio...”

“Did those Elves fried whatever good sense you had in that bird-brain of your? Whatever possessed you to try something like this?”

“Terio, I’m fine.”

“Fine, I’ll believe that when elves will stop eating grass. If your brain wasn’t fried before, now I’m sure it is! No one should be able to channel that place’s power and no one did since the Ancients’ time when the first nine riders were riding the First of the Dragons.”

Harry shrugged.



“Well Teneb and I did channel some of it and survived... I wanted to warn you of the taint of the Magical planes. It’s started spreading and is affecting the dragons.”

There was a small silence before Terio spoke up again.

“We feared something like that when our most ancient enchantments started wavering.”

Harry felt himself grow cold.

“Are they falling?”

Terio let out a snort.

“No, Dwarf-made enchantments are stronger than that. They were immediately reinforced and will hold for now. What is going on? Knowing you, you should be in the thick of it.”

Harry sighed.

“Not by choice. However I think that Voldemort-”

“That Dark Lord of yours?”

“Yes, I think he is about to accomplish a ritual.”

“Which one?”

“Apparently one attempted by someone called Djaira.”

Harry couldn’t understand what was then said, but from the tone of the voice and the various grunts that it wasn’t polite conversation material.

“I’ll take it she isn’t a favorite of your race.”

“That- ” he broke off in a series of expletives once more “was trice cursed by our race, cursed once for betraying our trust, cursed twice for killing fifty of our children, cursed thrice for trying to go against the laws of Magic by trying to call back what should forever be forgotten.”



“Not a favorite indeed.”

“You could say that. It was one of the only cases where all the races agreed to something. She was judged by a jury of representatives from each races and condemned to Death for her crimes. How close is this Veldomo” Harry had to refrain from smiling “to perform that ritual?” The young man sobered up quickly.

“Very, from what the elves told me, he is only lacking one key component and then it will only be a question of when and where.”

“And what of this component? I do hope it is well hidden.”

“They are or so the Vampires told me. He needs a vial of blood of the Enchanter, whoever this guy might have been. Adrien told me they were going to spirit away all the families carrying that bloodline.”

“I do hope that giant bat did something right for once.”

“Me too. Do you know of a way to warn him of this development?”

Terio laughed.

“So this call was not completely disinterested, human... But I forgive you. I have something better to propose you. Some of my leaders are meeting Vampires in two days’ time regarding a new command of weapons from their community. They have wanted to meet you for a while now and Old Adrien should be there.”

“So will I then.”

“Where should you be then?”

“Horevald probably.”

“I will send you instructions. Make sure you’ll be alone.”

“I will.”

They both talked for a few more minutes before Harry ended the communication and went to sleep.



The morning came too quickly.

Rexeran and Gae came to Darkana and together, riders and Dragons traveled back to Horevald, Demenor having the situation well in hand.

They arrived at Horevald and climbed off the dragons' back.

"Rexeran, can we spend some time together later on?"

The Sowaroc, placed his huge head at Harry's level.

You don't have to ask, I will wait for you here when you are done.

Harry gently fingered the dragon's head.

"Thank you Rexeran..." Even Teneb could understand all the things implied in those three words.

This time they had to explain the situation before the whole council.

The Queen had them gather in the Council room. Harry and Teneb had to stand on a stage before four stands filled with representatives from the four Elf casts as well as the Magis Elders and representatives of the Afiwea.

Harry was a bit unsettled about having to talk to all those people, most of them who were less than well-disposed towards him.

He kept his head high, not letting them see how much they were affecting him. Once they had finished their report, the Queen thanked them before allowing them to leave the room. As Harry passed through the doors two guards were ready to close on their backs, he could hear an explosion of sounds and the counselors shouted to try to make themselves heard, the different factions gathering together.

Harry looked at Teneb, rolling his eyes.

"I wouldn't like to be in that room for anything in the world," he stated.

Teneb snorted.

"No kidding, I really don't envy father, Valera and Celen."



Harry smiled.

“True, I’m going outside to meet with Rexeran.”

Teneb nodded.

“Alright, I will go see my mother and Delia.”

Harry agreed and made his way outside.

The Sowaroc was walking for him and together the two of them walked away from prying eyes, the dragons looking quite awkward on the ground for a creature which was so grateful in the air. However it did not take away the powerful aura surrounding him, his golden scales gleaming in the winter sun.

Through their bonds, Rexeran told him of the History of the Dragons and their riders, of their legends and the heroes of old.

They stopped under a crop of tree overlooking a small cottage next to Horevald. Rexeran folded his legs under him as he let himself rest on the lake’s shore, Harry sitting down, his back resting against the Dragon’s chest, his eyes closed, listening to Rexeran mental voice, enjoying this moment spent with his Dragon as he was starting to think Rexeran as his. It even worried him sometimes. Rexeran was a proud and free creature, who was he to think of him as his.

*/ It is as it should be, Astyan. /*

“What?”

*/ I will be yours as you will be mine. Our minds will be one. That’s what a true bond is. /*

Harry looked up at him.

“You mean you can hear my thoughts?”

Rexeran offered him a Draconian smile.

*/ No, if I wanted to, I am powerful enough to bring down your shields but that would not be our bond. For now, our bond only allows me to*



*hear thoughts which are linked to our bond and us. The rest will come with time. /*

Harry let his head fall back to rest against the dragon's body.

"Tell me more about the Old Times."

Rexeran picked up his story telling where he had stopped.

Meanwhile, back at the castle, Teneb had gone to visit Harry's friend. He found her surrounded by four people, two of them wearing the pale green robes of apprentice healers.

As he drew closer, anger spread on his face.

"Hair..."

"I know, but it's strange how closely to us they are built."

"You're kidding Peyra! Look at that face, those features! It's nothing like ours. Those humans are so massive, no refinement. But well, it's not like they are refined in anything they do."

"What happened to her?"

"I something to do with mind magic, I think..."

The three other laughed.

"Those humans! They are so weak, it's pitiful. Can you believe that they need sticks to use their magic?"

"Really?"

Another was watching fascinated as Hermione started shivering a little, drawing herself in a tight ball.

"What is she doing?"

One of the apprentices shrugged.

"Don't know, how can you say with them?"



The fourth one fingered her hair.

“What about that stick?”

“Yes, I’ll show you. I think they placed it there...”

Teneb chose to step in, knowing that wizards didn’t like other people handling their wands without permission.

“Can I ask what you think you are doing?”

The four youths turned to look at him.

“A-athar Teneb. We-... er I mean, we were checking on the patient.”

Teneb snarled.

“So all four of you are experienced Mind Healers. Well, I think I will watch you during this session then, Athar Harry will be glad to know his close friend is in good hands.”

The two apprentices paled while the two others were looking for ways out. It was obvious they had nothing to do here.

Teneb crossed his arms, his eyes cold.

“I will ask my question once more. What are you doing here?”

“I would like to know the answer to this question too, apprentices,” stated someone behind them.

The two apprentices bowed so low Teneb was sure they were going to fall to the floor.

“Master Healer Orian, we-.... I mean, we were...”

The second one tried to explain themselves.

“Master Healer, we were just... showing our friends how close to us human are. This is the first time that a human is living among us. We-...”



The old Healer raised his hand sharply, anger showing on his face.

“You thought you would bring people here to gawk at a torture victim, a Nightmare spiral’s torture victim at that. By behaving as mindless simpletons you just reduced all our work for the past week to nothing. I do hope you at least enjoyed the entertainment.”

The two apprentices had turned an interesting shade of green going to white with red blotches.

“Leave us, your Masters and myself will deal with you later when a proper punishment would have been chosen. As to you two!” He turned to the other two youths who had started to follow the apprentices out. “Don’t think you are not in trouble for this. This is a restricted Mind ward and you were never among those allowed to enter this room.”

“But...”

“You don’t have any excuse!” snapped the man in a quiet whisper. “I know who you both are and I know your parents. I also have a fairly good idea of what punishment I will ask for you. If you wanted to see humans, you will see humans. Now get out of my sight.”

They did not wait for him to say anymore and all but ran out of the room.

Teneb went to sit next to Hermione trying to use his own magic to soothe her.

Orian came closer too and started to exude calmness.

“Athar, can you recall a memory from your friend and retell it to her as you view it in your mind... Choose a happy carefree one.”

For the next half an hour, Teneb remained in Hermione’s room, helping Orian calm her mind and try to undo whatever harm had been done.

Once the young woman was sleeping, they both left.



“How is she doing?” asked Teneb as they entered in the private gardens of the Healing Houses.

“Better than we expected, Athar. She’s proving to be quite resilient. We hope that she will make a full recovery. Both your and Athar Harry’s contribution has helped greatly. She also reacted well to our positive therapy. Later in the afternoon, we will try to have her take a tour of the gardens.”

“You think she will do it?”

Orian shrugged.

“She has reacted well to Healer Xaelle and young Mirya and allows them to touch her. We are optimistic.”

Teneb nodded.

“I will try to be there as will Athar Harry though I cannot make any promises.”

“His presence would be a great asset. However I will ask you to tell young Djaryle not to come. No matter how well intentioned she is, her visits are doing the young lady no good. It even seems to distress her.”

Teneb frowned upon hearing this.

“I didn’t know she was visiting lady Hermione. I will talk to her.”

They parted way as Orian went back to his office while Teneb went to look for Djaryle. He finally found her in the Library.

Stopping by her he spoke up.

“Djaryle, I need to talk to you.”

“Alright,” she moved some books aside to leave him some space.

“In private,” he added tersely.

“Oh... Is there a problem?”



The elf shook his head.

“No, at least I don’t think so.”

She shot him a puzzled look but stood up and followed him outside and to a small room.

“So, what is going on, Teneb? Why all this secrecy?”

Teneb looked at her searchingly.

“Why have you visited Harry’s friend? You barely know her so your presence can’t be that reassuring to her even from what Healer Orian told me, it even distressed her.”

Djaryle looked down.

“I just wanted to help, Teneb. I didn’t know I was doing more wrong than good.”

Teneb shot her a hard look.

“Don’t give me that, Djaryle. You might not be that strong of a receiver Empath, but you could not have ignored her distress. Even the thickest non Empath would be able to see it.”

“I did not, Teneb. What are talking about? You know very well that I’m only an Empath emitter!”

“You have eyes, Djaryle.”

“I just wanted to help her, Teneb!”

Teneb shook his head.

“You’re not telling me everything. I know you Djaryle; I thought you could trust me.”

Djaryle sighed.



“Teneb, I can’t tell you. Please, just know I’m doing this for the good of everyone. No one will be hurt. It’s a task my family has been carrying for generations.”

Teneb looked outside.

“It has something to do with Harry, isn’t it? That’s why you were so friendly with him? It was more than genuine open-mindedness.”

“I can’t tell you.”

“You don’t need to. You should be careful. If there is one thing Harry positively hate it’s to be manipulated, particularly if you’re using his friend. Tread carefully and do not involve me in this. Just know I’ll be watching you,” there was a tired and disappointed edge to Teneb’s voice.

None of them said anything for awhile then Teneb left.

Djaryle looked outside, sadness overwhelming her. Was she really doing what was best? She steeled herself. She couldn’t go back now. She had to trust in her Father’s vision and in her family’s legacy and the secret that had been passed down to her. They would understand in time.

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Teneb went back to his family’s quarters where he found his mother alone, playing her harp as she looked outside.

“Teneb! You’re back. How are you?”

“I’m fine, I’m just so tired...”

She smiled at him.

“Sit down, Teneb.”

The young elf complied, tacking his head in his hands.

“What is the matter?”



"It's getting too much for me, being Athars, the ritual this human is close to performing, the animosity because of my friendship with Harry. Do you know that spare Celen and Djaryle as well as three others nobody has sent word for me or come to see me? And now I just discovered that Djaryle is using the human witch to manipulate Harry..."

Ysela put down her harp.

"I'm afraid there is little I can do about the problems linked to your title Teneb. Power has always excited resentment, greed and envy. Your friendship with young Harry is just the pretext they chose to justify their actions. As to young Djaryle... Valera and I will talk with her."

"But..."

Ysela carded her hands in his hair as she used to when he was an elfling.

"Shh, I wouldn't involve myself if I didn't believe it is needed. Your friend is extremely powerful. Should he lose control of it, the consequences would be dire. Young Djaryle is playing with fire and we might be all burnt."

"Harry wouldn't loose control like this, he wouldn't harm anyone."

"No?"

Teneb thought back to what had happened when Najira had nearly raped his friend, how close they had been to be killed.

"He would... not willingly but yes."

"He is of Pendragon's blood."

"What?"

Ysela sighed.

"Valera told me she had given him Pendragon's journal and that he had been able to open it."



“What does it have to do with all that is going on?”

Ysela smiled sadly.

“Valera and I aren’t sure, but Pendragon’s line was one of the few human lines that our ancestors watched over and asked their descendants to keep track of. They just wrote that their blood held great powers that would come to light once more after centuries of having sleeping dormant in the members of this line.”

Teneb frowned.

“How could she be sure he was of his line?”

Ysela looked at him fondly.

“You don’t remember the legends I told you when you were a little?”

Teneb furrowed his brows.

“You mean the one about the men gifted with eyes of emerald?”

Ysela nodded.

“But green eyes are common, or at least not that unusual.”

“Not that shade of green, Teneb.”

Teneb closed his eyes.

“What does it mean, mother?”

Ysela shook her head.

“Like most of those of Ynris, I only know of the Legends. A lot of secrets are surrounding that line and only two families knew a bit more. Valera’s was gifted the diary and asked to watch over the line and maybe other tasks. The second one was Djaryle’s.”

Teneb leant back.

“This is such a mess.”



“Don’t worry Teneb, I’m sure everything will clear itself when time comes,” she said brushing his hair.

Mother and son remained silent, both enjoying the other’s presence and the calm of this moment for as long as it lasted.



## Chapter 36

Not that far away, Harry blinked, realizing that it was growing quite dark around. Looking around, he noticed it was dusk and that clouds had hidden the winter sun.

*/It will snow tomorrow, Astyan./*

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“If you say so... I have to go back...” he paused “Thank you for being here with me today.”

Rexeran let out a soft grumble.

*/This is what a dragon-rider bond should be, Astyan, do not thank me for something you are due./*

Knowing he wouldn't win Harry shook his head.

“Will you be there tomorrow, Rexeran.”

*/I will Harry. I still have much to teach you./*

Harry stretched a little then stood up as the dragon did so. Looking at Rexeran, Harry was awed once more at the fact that the Sowaroc had chosen him.

As if sensing his thoughts, Rexeran lowered his head that was bigger than the young man's chest.

*/There wasn't any doubt for me, Astyan, from the first time I met you./*

Harry closed his eyes and rested his head against the reptilian neck, trying to forget about that night.

*/Learn from your mistakes, Astyan. Do not flee from them for you'll never escape them./*

“Unfortunately it's often easier said than down.”

*/Go rest, Astyan, tomorrow is a new day./*



“Good night.”

*/I will guard your dreams. Rexeran opened his wings and sprang in the air./*

Harry went back to the castle slowly, trying to prolong this moment of peace for as long as possible.

As he entered the palace, he headed for the Healing Wings and found his friend sitting in her bed, her eyes a little less lost than before.

He turned to the young Healer standing at her bedside talking softly to her.

“Healer Xaelle?”

“Athar Harry,” she answered calmly, bowing her head. She turned toward the young woman in her care. “Hermione, there is someone that has come to see you.”

The brown-haired witch started trembling

“Who is it? What is he doing here? Why did I not hear him enter?”

Xaelle smiled reassuringly

“It’s Harry. He is perfectly safe. He came everyday to see you since you arrived here.”

Hermione’s face scrunched in thought as she kept wriggling her hands nervously, her eyes fixed on her hands.

“Harry?... Harry... I can’t remember! Why can’t I remember?” Her last question was laced with growing panic.

Xaelle slowly raised her hand and carded it through the young woman’s hair.

“Shh Hermione, you will remember with time.” As she spoke she motioned to Harry to sit next to her. “Won’t you say hello to him?”



Hermione slowly looked up her eyes widening as she took in Harry's appearance.

"I-... Harry..."

She started trembling as pictures rushed through her mind.

A scrawny boy dressed in overly large clothes talking with a red-head with a dirt smudge on his nose.

A Troll, a three headed-dog.

Black flames and watching the young boy dressed in black robes walk through them.

A huge hall with young people cheering as red tapestries with a golden lion fell from the ceiling.

Hissing.

Walking through a corridor with a mirror.

Occulus Reparo.

A black dog.

Riding a mix of an eagle and a horse.

Sirius

A dragon

Accio

Watching the same boy reappear bloody and exhausted with a corpse in the middle of a maze.

Cedric Diggory.

Harry Potter missing.

Slapping a young dark-haired young man.



Emptying vials of a golden potion in the sink, tears in her eyes.

A fire, a monster.

An elf.

Entering a room and seeing the young man in a bed unmoving.

Animagus

She blinked as a hand grabbed hers.

“Hermione?”

That voice... That voice saying she had let him down, abandoned him to die.

“Harry?...Harry, I’m so sorry, please forgive me. I didn’t mean to leave you. I should have tried harder, I should have-”

Arms circled her shoulders as she started sobbing.

“You did not fail me, Hermione, you did not.”

For the next hour, Harry held Hermione, whispering soothing words to her, trying to reassure her that she did not fail him.

As she fell asleep, emotionally drained, he rested her against her pillows, bringing the covers above her.

“Sleep, I will be back tomorrow.”

“I won’t fail you again,” she whispered sleepily.

“You never failed me Hermione, you are my friend. Sleep now.”

Her breathing evened out and once he was sure she was sleeping he got off the bed and rolled his shoulder.

“Your visits always help her greatly,” said the healer standing up.

“She was quite lucid for once.”



“She’s making huge progress and today’s outing in the garden did her a whole of good. The contact with the unicorn seemed to help heal her too.”

“I just wished she never had to go through this...”

“She’ll come out all the stronger from this. You are already doing everything possible to help her.”

Harry looked at his friend and shook his head.

“No use wasting life away wishing for the impossible.”

He went to his room and to his bed. The next day was spent between meeting with Reald and his peers, visiting Hermione and spending time with Rexeran.

The night came before Harry realized it. As the sun set, he left the castle, having warned Teneb of where he was going and walked away.

The landscape was covered by a thin layer of snow that creaked under Harry’s feet.

He stopped by a lone willow overlooking a small pond and sat at the feet of said tree. No sooner had he sat down that the ground under him spun and he felt him fall down a black pit crying out in surprise. Then the pit transformed into a rather steep slide. As he spotted some light, Harry got himself into a tight ball and rolled to his feet as soon as his descent ended, one of his knives out and looking around for potential enemies.

A low chuckle got his attention as well as a slow clapping. He whirled on his heels and met with the amused eyes of Adrien.

The Vampire was surrounded by his usual companions though Harry spotted three others standing back.

“What an entrance, Athar...”

Harry shot him a dirty look which Adrien ignored.



"I trust you remember my companions."

Harry eyed the three other Vampires with a wry look.

"I do, if you don't count those three others," he gestured towards the right corner.

Adrien's green eyes glinted in the dim light. From the surprised look one of the three unknown vampires shot the Ancient, Harry gathered that he shouldn't have been able to see them.

The Vampire said nothing but gestured to the other Vampires to come out.

"Athar, this is Lorna," he pointed to a tall, skinny red-head "next to her are Stefanov and Angharad."

Harry saluted the three Undead who returned it, still slightly puzzled.

"Your magical awareness is growing quickly. How did you know they were with me?"

Harry smirked.

"Now, Adrien, you know that a magician never reveal his tricks."

Adrien sent him an amused look.

"You know you will tell me eventually..."

Harry rolled his eyes. Could he get any more arrogant?

"But why make it is easy for you?" he replied. "Now, no matter how... stimulating this conversation might be, I think people are waiting for us."

"True, young Harry," stated a gruff voice from behind them.

Harry turned around with a smile and went to greet the dwarf, crabbing his forearm trying not to wince as the dwarf nearly broke his.

"Strength and Wealth, Terio."



“Strength and Wealth Harry. I see that your stay among the tree-hugger gave you some more white hair... Not good for your health, you know?”

Harry let out a snort.

“Good to see you too, Terio. I hope you’ve been well.”

“We’ve been busy. I have not seen that much agitation in our cities since that earthquake a century ago.”

Adrien smirked.

“Yes, the one caused by a quarrelling couple of Earth Elemental.”

Harry’s eyes widened.

“I don’t think I want to know.”

Terio snorted and while muttering about bird-brain Elementals, he guided them through tunnels. They walked for about ten minutes. After the five first ones, Harry had completely lost count of how many turns they had taken. They finally stopped by two solid stone doors guarded by four mean looking dwarves.

“The Elders are waiting for us,” grunted Terio.

The four guards looked them up and down, sneering a little as they took in Harry’s lithe form. The sneer however faded as they noticed his weapons and his mark on his temple.

They parted grudgingly and pushed the doors opened, their muscles bulging out.

Adrien and Harry followed Terio inside, the other Vampires following.

Harry repressed a snort as he took in the place they had entered. Dwarves really compensated their short height by the majesty of the architecture. Harry even wondered how they could make ceilings that high... The wonders of magic again no doubt.



Columns spiraled high up supporting elegant gothic arches. Dwarf runes were engraved up their whole length. Shields, mass, axes were hung on them. A luminescent stone was layered all around the place, bathing it in a white light. Stones tables and chairs were spread around. A stage was standing in the back of the room, a long table placed on it with seven chairs placed around, the central one being a throne.

All but two of the chairs were occupied and the five dwarves were looking at them shrewdly. Harry repressed a sigh, feeling a headache coming.

Four hours later, Harry exited the room, sore, sporting several swallow cuts, head pounding from the bargaining the Vampires had driven regarding the coming shipment of weapons.

However he had managed to secure a deal with the Dwarves, no matter how loose it was. They had seemed as concerned by his news concerning Voldemort's doing as the Vampires. Adrien had immediately sent messengers to the locations where the different members of the bloodline had been spirited away.

It might have had something to do with his duel against one of their Champions too... For someone this burly he sure moved quickly not to mention that his weapons had been dreadfully real.

He repressed a groan as someone slapped him heartedly on his right shoulder, hitting a bruise dead on.

"Well done, lad!"

Harry took a deep breath, trying to dull the pain shooting down his arm with his magic.

"Why, thank you Terio..."

The dwarf smiled toothily. Harry had to keep himself from taking a step back. Dwarves should not smile... Terio continued to talk.

"You impressed them quite a lot, Harry."



Harry's eyebrow rose to his hairline. Recalling the stony faced dwarves in the room that had stared blankly at him for the whole duration of their talks, he could not think back of anything that indicated they had been impressed...

Terio seemed to read his thoughts as he let out a gravely laugh.

"Believe me, lad, they were or they would have never agreed to the deal..."

Adrien smiled, letting his fang shine in the torch light.

"Never try to understand dwarf facial expressions, Athar. I've been trying for centuries and am still getting a headache."

The burly looking Vampire snorted.

"That might have something to do with their faces too, Adrien..."

The Vampire Lord let out a small laugh.

"Indeed..."

"You Vampires have no appreciation for true beauty. You only admire what is delicate and frail-looking. Now, us Dwarves, like solid healthy looking female with stocky bodies, large hips..."

"- and a beard?" cut Adrien, amusedly.

"- and a beard, yes..."

Harry was looking at the both of them, slightly alarmed at the turn of the discussion.

"Er..."

Adrien shot him an amused smile.

"Why, Athar, you wish to add your thoughts?"

Harry blanched slightly.



“No! I just wanted to ask you if all the families had been placed in safe places.”

Adrien nodded.

“They were. I will however check on all of them to make sure we didn’t overlook distant relatives.”

Harry nodded, relieved. They had to prevent Voldemort from completing this ritual at all costs.

They soon reached an exit and climbed out. They found themselves in a small glade. Harry took a few deep breaths, enjoying the chilling cold air. He turned to look at Terio.

“Thank you for arranging this meeting. I’ll get started on my end of the deal as soon as possible.”

Terio nodded.

“Good, we’ll await your words and will be ready should you need us on Solstice.”

Harry brought his right fist to his chest.

“Strength and wealth, Terio.”

“Strength and Wealth.”

Terio nodded to the Vampires and then made his way back underground. Harry turned to Adrien.

“Thanks for your help.”

“Think nothing of it, Athar. It is after all in our interest to see that man defeated once for all.”

Harry smiled.

“Indeed, it wouldn’t do for him to wipe your food source.”

Adrien let out a small laugh.



“Touché, Athar.”

They walked for a few minutes in silence.

“I wanted to ask you something,” said Harry, his eyes fixed forwards.

Curious, Adrien spared him an interested glance.

“And what is it, Athar?”

“I would like to know if one of your men would be interested to practice with me. Teneb has been my only sparring partner for the past year, but we’re starting to know each other too well and dummies are quite predictable.”

The burly looking vampire, Max, if he remembered well, chuckled.

“Too true...”

Adrien shrugged.

“Well, I see no harm in that... One of us could meet with you tomorrow night for some practicing. However, I would like to gauge your power level to see who could be an even match for you.”

Harry nodded and relaxed the grip he had on his power, letting it flare briefly.

All the Vampires took a step back, a dazed red light entering their eyes. The Asiatic looking wizard and the dark one quickly shook it off, as did the women.

“Adrien? So what do you think?” asked Harry eyeing slightly confused.

Adrien looked Harry up and down, a hungry look in his eyes.

“You’ve grown since we last met, Athar.” His voice had deepened a little.

Harry’s right eyebrow shot up.

“What do you mean?”



“Your power. You can’t understand, but to us vampires, power is like music. Before yours was a gentle humming; now it is the most enticing melody,” he explained, taking a step forwards.

Harry frowned.

“Adrien?”

He looked at the other vampires who were looking at their leader worryingly.

The Asiatic one stepped forwards while the black one sent a shock through Max and the women did the same to the blond vampire.

“You should go now, Athar,” he said, tense.

Harry shook his head, confused.

“What is going on?...”

Adrien smiled, displaying his fangs.

“Nothing at all, Athar...” He took two more steps towards him.

Harry was starting to get rather uncomfortable.

Hien-Na was joined by Max who seemed to have come to his senses.

“Athar, you need to leave, now. We will be back tomorrow night for some practice.”

Harry’s green eyes shifted back and forth between the two vampires.

*/ Do what he says, Astyan, you need to leave, now! /*

Harry was shocked by the mental urging from Rexeran and obeyed immediately. With a soft pop, he transformed into his raven form and flew away, back to Horevald.

It took him a few minutes to reach the clearing near the city. He landed and transformed back to his human form.



A large form landed next to him.

*/ Are you alright, Astyan? He didn't harm you?! /*

Harry frowned, feeling completely lost.

"What is going on, Rexeran?"

The Sowaroc brought his huge head against Harry's chest, not answering.

"Rexeran?"

The dragon curled up around Harry, bringing his wing out to cover the both of them in a protective shield.

*/ You have to promise me to be careful around Adrien, Astyan. /*

"Why?" Harry asked, soothed by the magic coming from his bonded.

The Magical creature let out a mental sigh.

*/ Adrien is one of the eldest Vampire roaming this world. He learnt many things, though his preferred field was the Mind Arts. However, he is also a Wielder. /*

"A wielder?"

*/ He can manipulate magical energies, store them and mutate them. But it makes him susceptible to raw power. High levels of magical energies act like drugs to him. If he doesn't shield himself beforehand, he loses all self restraint until he has siphoned that power. That's why you needed to leave. You couldn't stay! I can't bear to loose you once more! /*

Through their bond, Harry could see that the dragon was highly upset at what had just happened. He leaned against the golden body, letting Rexeran shield him, knowing he needed the reassurance his rider was well. They stayed like this till dawn, the Dragon's heat protecting the young man from the winter cold.

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The sun rays woke Harry.

He stirred like a cat, cocooned in Rexeran magic.

“Rexeran?”

*/Yes Astyan?/*

“Are you alright?”

The Dragon smiled.

*/I am, Astyan. Forgive me for last night./*

Harry petted the huge head.

“There is nothing to forgive. You were just looking out for me. I assume that it is not the first time that one of your bonded is faced with a crazed Adrien.”

*/Partly, yes. Adrien and I have a lot of history between us. He never learnt not to get involved in matters that didn't concern him./*

Harry nodded, knowing better than to push for more information.

“That does sound like him.”

Rexeran looked at him with concern in his rainbow eyes.

*/Promise me to be careful around him, Astyan. I do not want to lose you to him./*

Harry nodded.

“I will, Rexeran.”

The young man rose to his feet while Rexeran shook the snow from his body, getting some on Harry in the process, earning a glare from his rider followed by a fistful of snow behind his ears.

Harry had barely the time to take deep breath as Rexeran used his wings to propel snow towards him, burying him to his waist.



“Rexeran!”

The Dragon, just flicked his tail, sending more snow his way.

*/If you're going to play with fire, you should be ready to get burnt, Astyan./* he answered his voice tainted with amusement.

Harry got out of the snow, using his fire element to vaporize it and dry his clothes. Then Rider and Dragon headed back towards Horevald in comfortable silent. Harry enjoyed the peace of the snow covered land and forest. With a start, he realized he had completely forgotten about his small fox. He just hoped that Hagrid had taken good care of the little troublemaker.

They reached the city's door. Harry made his way inside, while Rexeran took flight and disappeared in a small flash of magic.

Harry resumed his walk back to his rooms, deep in thoughts. Once there, he went to take a shower and changed clothes before slumping in a chair with a sigh.

He kept running everything in his head, trying to think of something he had missed, something he should have done. He was then a bit startled to hear someone knock on his door.

Standing up from his chair, he went to open the door.

“Teneb, Celen?”

Teneb shot him a small smile.

“Good morning, Harry. Can we come in?”

Harry stepped aside, letting them in.

“Have a seat. Is there a problem?”

Teneb looked at Celen.

“Not really.”

Harry raised an eyebrow.



“Meaning there is. What is going on?”

Celen raked a hand in his hair.

“You know your friend has a communication stone?”

Harry nodded.

“I gave it to her.”

“Well, apparently she left it in your world with someone else. He used the stone last night.”

“Who was it?” cut Harry.

“Your red-haired friend,” answered Celen.

“What did he want?”

Teneb held up his hand to reassure his friend.

“Nothing is wrong. The Elemental Masters would have called us if there was any cause for worry. He just wanted some news. I must say he was less than pleased to learn of what had happened.”

Harry winced.

Ron’s temper might have cooled down drastically since he left, but that didn’t mean it had disappeared.

“I get the picture.”

Teneb snorted.

“Indeed, He asked to talk to you as soon as possible.”

Harry nodded.

“Alright, anything else?”

Celen spoke up.



“Yes. You know the Council have been gathered for two days now, don’t you?”

“I do, I don’t envy you having to sit those meetings,” said Harry with a disgusted with a twitch of his lips.

Celen rolled his eyes.

“Anyway, after much - discussion -, they -”

“- You mean yelling?” cut Teneb.

Celen ignored his friend’s jibbing.

“They decided that the situation needed to be evaluated once more given these new developments. They have chosen Reald and three other Masters to go to your world. Kesle will also come. They want you or Teneb to escort them along with a full wing’s protection.”

Harry shrugged.

“I’ll go then, Teneb and I will ask for volunteers to come with me.”

Teneb handed him a piece of paper.

“I’ve already asked and all the members of your wing agreed to follow you.”

“How long would we stay there?”

Celen shrugged.

“A day, two at most. This ritual is supposed to take place on the 21st. If there is no problem, then it won’t take much more than a day for Reald and his peers to evaluate the situation. There is also the Demons’ matter. Apparently Reald might have come upon a warding ritual to protect your towns.”

Harry massaged his temples.

“Alright, I’ll leave tonight.”



“I’ll warn your riders to be ready. You’ll have a few others coming along.”

Harry turned expectantly towards his friend.

“What do you mean?”

“Healer Orian is sending two volunteers and two apprentices with you and Hysten has two Elites coming too,” explained Celen, hoping that Harry would not inquire as to why.

“By the way, did the Vampires have something to say regarding those families they were supposed to hide away?” asked Teneb changing the subject.

He suspected that telling Harry that those four had been ordered to go to the Wizarding World as a punishment for distressing his friend in the Healing Wing would not go well with him.

“They told me they had all been hidden. But they will check to make sure no one was missing or that minor branches of those families were overlooked.”

Teneb relaxed a little.

“This is good news at least.”

Harry shrugged.

“I hope so.” He paused for a few seconds, debating whether or not telling Celen of his deal with the Dwarves. His decision made, he spoke up once more. “Last night, I met with the Vampires but also the Dwarf Council.”

He repressed a snort at the gaping look on Celen’s face.

“Terio sends his regards Teneb.”

The Elf shot him a wry look.

“I don’t doubt that or the fact that those were not his exact terms.”



Harry smiled.

“Anyway, they agreed to help my people should worse come to worse. The deal is quite loose but the core facts are clear.”

“What did they ask for?”

Harry shot Teneb a wry look.

“What makes you think they ask anything?”

“Please, they are dwarves...”

Harry laughed.

“True. However they didn’t drive that hard of a bargain.”

“Harry...”

“Their request was perfectly reasonable.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning a certain quantity of various metals and a power stone,” answered Harry calmly.

There was a second of silence, then:

“WHAT?! How could you agree to such terms? To let them get their greedy paws on a power stone?!”

Harry just watched the young elf prince, slightly amused.

“I think they could have asked for far worse things. Moreover this stone will be engraved with warding, protection and healing runes. They won’t be able to use it for anything else.”

Celen raked his hand through his blond locks.

“I don’t know... I mean... dwarves....”

Harry shrugged.



"I could say the same... I mean... elves...."

Teneb repressed a smile as did Celen.

"Alright, though I don't think I'll inform the council of that particular deal," said the Prince, standing up. "So, you'll leave at dusk?"

Harry nodded.

"I just need to gather my things and talk to a few people. I also need to see to Hermione."

Tened walked to him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"I'll watch her, don't worry."

Celen looked at Harry, his eyes solemn.

"She'll be protected, you have my word, and nothing will come to her again. Hysten's men already volunteered to guard her."

"Alright, have everyone ready at the Dragons' landing area. Celen, how can I talk to my friend to warn them of my arrival?"

"Just use your stone. The destination code is Imnielen."

Harry nodded and watched Teneb and Celen leave the room, deep in thought.

Taking out his communication stone, he spoke up.

"Adessa Imnielen."

The stone started to shine gently and after a minute as Harry was about to end the communication, Ron's recognizable voice.

"Who is it? Hermione? Is it you?"

"Ron?"

There was a slight pause.



“Harry?!”

Harry smiled a little.

“Yes, it’s me, Ron.”

“How are you? How is Hermione? What’s going on? Why are you calling?”

“Whoa, slow down, Ron. I’m fine as can be in the current situation. Hermione is healing, she’s getting better.”

A sigh of relief was heard at that.

“Good, I hope you got whoever did that to her, and got them good...”

Harry repressed the feeling of rage that rose in him at the thoughts of Hermione’s torturers.

“They will be punished accordingly to their crime, Ron. I won’t let them get away with a slap on the wrist.”

“That’s good then. Now, why are you calling?”

Harry quickly explained what had happened leaving no time for Ron to start on one of the famous Weasley rants.

“So, if I understood everything, you’re coming back tonight. Apparently, Voldemort is really really close to performing that big bad ritual that could open the gates of Hell and condemn us to an eternity of Darkness and those Elves admitted that he might be able to complete it, though they said it was impossible a few months ago. You are bringing more of those stuck-up pricks here to see if we’re going to die in a few days. Moreover you made a deal with the Dwarves to get them to help us... Right?”

“Right in one.”

There was a slight pause.

“I don’t know how you can stay sane, Harry. I’ll warn Dumbledore and the others of your arrival.”



“Thank you, is there anything going on at Hogwarts?”

“You mean other than the Death Eaters attacks on the Muggles, the fact that Hogsmeade has become a no wizard land, that the Forbidden Forest is swarming with Dark Creatures? Or do you mean other than the fact that we have reports of Werewolves attacks in the North, of Kelpies and Chimeras running through the country.”

Harry closed his eyes, trying to control the panic rising through him.

“Alright, the other riders and I will try to do what we can to help you. We’ll arrive at dusk. How are things at Hogwarts?”

“Not that great, but we’re holding up.”

“Were there attacks?”

“No, a few scuffles here and there, but for now, I think they are trying to surround us and cut all communication lines.”

“We will help as much as we can. How is everyone?”

“Tired, stressed, but we’re fine for now. Except for Blaise and a few other students that is.”

Harry felt himself grow cold.

“Blaise, as in Blaise Zabini?”

“Yes, you know, the Slytherin. They’ve been confined in the Infirmary for a few days. Apparently they all made an allergic reaction to something in their food... Nothing to worry about.”

“Who were the others, Ron.”

“Well, there was Blaise, his little sister, two cousins of his, a guy from Beaubâtons, another from the Spain school.”

Harry started cursing quietly.



“Ron, it’s extremely important, you have to place a 24/7 guard on them. You need to have Mrs. Pomfrey check them for any cuts or needle mark.”

“What do you mean Harry? They’ve just eaten something that didn’t go well with them, that’s all.”

“Ron, you don’t understand, they are all members of the Enchanter’s line. And the only thing Voldemort needs now is some pure blood from this line before he can complete his ritual. The vampires were supposed to get everyone into safe houses!”

“But Harry, admitting that someone managed to get some of their blood, how would they have get it out of Hogwarts to the Dark Lord. I-oh... I see what you mean. I’ll go do as you said, Harry. I’ll see you tonight.”

“See you, Ron, take care.”

“Odal”

The stone dimmed but Harry didn’t waste time looking at it. Quickly, he packed everything he thought he would need.

At first he had first thought that nothing particular would be needed, this changed everything.

He looked at his battle outfit before placing it in another bag along with his poisons, their antidotes, his daggers, his sword, his darts and even his knives and bow.

He also took two leather bound manuscript and carefully placed them in his bag with other clothes for a week at least. He also placed a small chest filled with various precious or semi-precious stones to be used as focuses or during rituals.

That done he took the three large bags and gathered them on his bed. Then, he took out Terio’s gift and activated the Flame.

“Terio?”



There was a few seconds of silence before the gruff voice of the dwarf echoed in the room.

*"Harry?"*

"Yes, can I talk to you for a few minutes?"

*"You already are, but I can give you a few moments. I can say that between you and Snow White and his undead, I've never been so busy."*

Harry repressed a snort at the picture of Adrien dressed as a fairytale princess.

"Well, I'll make it short. You must warn your Council that the Dark Lord of my Lord seems to have gathered all the components for his ritual."

There was a sharp intake of breath followed by a few grunts.

*"I thought those idiots of Vampires were protecting those carrying the blood!"*

Harry sighed.

"Thought so too, but apparently several were still residing in Hogwarts. They were all sent to the Healing wings this morning for food poisoning."

*"But you don't believe it."*

"No at all, it's too convenient and they would suspect nothing should someone come and take some blood to do some tests..."

*"Convenient indeed, I'll warn the Council and warn those Vampires of that development."*

"Thank you. Tell them that I won't be able to meet them at Horevald tonight, but that they can find me at Hogwarts."

*"You're leaving again then?"*



“Yes, Should something happen, it will take place in my world. Moreover the situation here is as stable as it'll get for now.”

*“Alright, I'll keep you informed of the Council decision. Should a battle take place, we'll probably see each other then.”*

“Not that I don't want to see you, Terio, but I hope it won't come to that to have you visit my world.”

*“Me too, Harry, me too. I'll go talk to the Council. Keep informed if things change.”*

“I'll do so, Health and Strength.”

*“Health and Strength”*

The Flame went back inside its locket as Harry closed it. Closing his eyes, he racked his hand in his hair, mechanically tying it back while thinking over all that he needed to go over.

Rising to his feet, he went to his bags, adding a few more things to them.

That done, he exited his room, locked it tightly before heading to find Valera to inform her of what he had just learnt.

He found Valera along with Doryan, Celen, TEneb and several councilors in the Queen's office, going over the rebuilding of the Isles cities.

Valera looked up.

“Athar? Is there a problem, Reald and his peers are still readying themselves.”

“None for now, your Majesty,” answered Harry with a small bow. “I contacted my world to warn them of our arrival and learnt that several members of the Enchanter's line which had been guarded at Hogwarts had fallen ill at the same time due to an alleged food poisoning.”



Valera frowned.

“You don’t believe it.”

“It’s too convenient and it would be easy for someone to disguise himself as a healer and go take some of their blood with the excuse of running analysis on it.”

Valera’s frown deepened.

“I’ll warn Reald of this new development. Do you think?...”

Harry nodded grimly.

“I told my friend to have people guard them 24/7. However, I think it’s already too late. As I speak, Voldemort must be readying himself to carry out his ritual.”

A councilor cleared his throat.

“Let’s not be hasty, Athar. The situation might not be so dire. After all they might not have had the time to take some of their blood or took too little.”

Harry gritted his teeth, biting the words he wanted to say.

Valera sighed.

“We will take what we just said into account in our preparations, Athar.”

Harry nodded.

“Thank you, your Majesty.”

Bowing sharply, he left the room quickly before he blasted that councilor through the wall.

He then went to warn Jihar and Hysten before heading back to his rooms to contact Demenor.



On his way he stopped by the Healing Houses. Upon entering, he saluted the few healers there. He made his way to the room where Hermione had been placed. Two guards were standing by its doors and nodded to him as he passed them.

He found Hermione sitting on her bed, leaning against fluffy pillows. Healer Xaelle was at her side, talking quietly with her.

They both looked up as he closed the door.

“Look Hermione, you have a visitor again today.”

Hermione smiled at him.

“Hello, Harry.”

Harry smiled back.

“Hello Hermione, how are you today?”

Since the day she had broken down in front of him, she had started to improve dramatically. She was undergoing three to four Mind Healing sessions a day to heal the scars on psyche as well as right her memories that had been corrupted by the spiral. Her moments of lucidity were more and more frequent and longer. She sometimes fell back into incoherent panic attacks upon hearing a word that she could associate with her torture but it was getting rarer.

“Tired, still confused, but things are starting to get clearer.”

“That’s good. What are you reading?”

“Some book I had brought with me for light reading.”

Harry eyed the thick book and read its title: “Comparative study of wandless versus focused magic.”

“Only you, Hermione,” he replied, chuckling.

“So, Harry, why are you here? Not that I mind your company.”

“I came to tell you good bye.”



A distressed expression made its way on her face upon hearing that.

“What? What happened?”

Harry went to sit on the other side of the bed.

“Do you remember the ritual Voldemort was trying to perform?”

Hermione’s face scrunched up as she racked her jumbled memory to find this particular piece of information.”

“I remember researching it a lot. It was something involving blood... The Enchanter’s blood... and someone called Luctan.”

Harry saw the healer go white upon hearing the name but motioned to her to stay silent.

“I was put on a day and night watch because of something I found in a diary, Grindelwald diary... It was something about Hell.... Gates.... The Opening of Hell’s Gates!”

She nearly shouted the last phrase, so glad she was to have managed to remember it.

“That’s right. Voldemort was only missing one key element, Enchanter’s blood.”

Hermione nodded.

“That’s right. I remember Vampires coming to the school to take some people away but Dumbledore refused, saying that Hogwarts was as safe as it could be. Apparently they managed to come to a compromise but then Blaise was placed under watch, his sister too...”

Harry gritted his teeth, so it was Dumbledore.

“That’s true, Hermione. Ron just called me and told me that Blaise and all those people had been sent to the Hospital Wing due to food poisoning. That’s why I’m going back. I think he managed to get enough of their blood to get some undiluted Enchanter blood. Should it be true, he will probably perform the ritual on the 21st.”



Hermione nodded.

“That’s the best time for him to do so, spare Halloween. The longest night of the year.”

“Yes, I’m going back to see if he managed to get some blood or not. If he did, then we’ll have to prepare for the worst.”

Hermione shuddered.

“Demons...”

Harry squeezed her hand.

“We’ll do all we can to prevent this from happening.”

She offered him a trembling smile.

“I know you’ll do, Harry. I assume I’m not allowed to come with you.”

Harry shook his head.

“You still need to recover, Hermione.”

“But I need to do something, or I’ll go crazy trying to guess what is happening.”

The young wizard bit his lip trying to think of something.

“I’ll talk with Celen to see if you can help with the research. After all if you are well enough to read that,” he pointed to the book, “you should be well enough to help the scholars. Provided that the healers agree to it, of course,” he added after Xaelle shot him a pointed look.

Hermione sighed.

“It’s not like I have a choice.”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“I’ll send a message everyday to keep you informed.”



“Thank you,” she answered gratefully.

They talked for a few more minutes before Harry stood up to leave. Xaelle said a few more things to the witch before following the Athar.

Once the door was closed, she spoke up.

“Is it true, Athar?”

“If you mean what I told her about that ritual, then yes it is.”

Xaelle took a deep breath.

“Then my prayers will be with you and my skills should you have need for them.”

Harry bowed to her in thanks.

“My deepest thanks, but by guarding and helping my friend as you are doing, you are already helping me more than you know.”

Xaelle crossed her arms in front of her chest and bowed low.

“Then I wish you luck in battle, Athar, May the Nine guide your arm.”

“May they guard you.”

He then left the Healing House to go back to his own. After talking with Demenor to warn him of this new turn of events and organize the wings.

It was already noon when he ended the communication with the Headquarters. Stretching a bit, he looked around trying to think of something he might have forgotten. His eyes fell on Pendragon’s diary he had left on one of the shelves.

Opening it, he went to take a quill and started writing in it.

-What do you now of the Hell’s Gates Opening Ritual?-

The diary glowed dimly for a few seconds before writing appeared.



*This ritual was first tried by an Elf called Luctan. Only the combined effort of all the races managed to stop him from succeeding. Later on, Djaira also tried but failed to free what should be forgotten.*

-What would happen should someone manage to perform the ritual?-

*Should the Gates open, it would free all those who dwell in the Underground and unleash a wave of Darkness not even the one who freed them would be able to contain. For Demons recognize no master but themselves. Such an act would also broke the seal upon those who must be forgotten and terrors like never seen since the first Age would spread across the worlds.*

Harry frowned, who were those “who must be forgotten”? Coming to think of it, he had heard that phrase before...

-Who are “those who must be forgotten”? –

*Evils. Devils that were sealed forever in the Depths of Hell while the First Dragons and the Nine Riders were protecting those Lands. It took the power of the Nine and of their bonded to trap them.*

- What were they?-

*The perversion of a Magis driven insane by greed and power. Nine children and nine dragons who were molded from birth to his perverted visions. They were tortured, broken and remade, transformed until nothing was left of what they had been and only darkness filled them. They killed their creator and started to kill and destroy.*

Harry bit his lip. As if one insane killer was not enough. However that had to be what was driving Voldemort to open the Gates. He surely thought he would be able to bind those Nine devils to his will. However from what he had just read, Harry did not think they would follow him. Voldemort might think he was using them but in truth it was them that were using him.

Sighing, he started writing once more, having one more question.

-Why was Pendragon's line so important?-



*I do not know the answer to that question.*

Rolling his eyes, Harry closed the diary and put the quill aside. Looking at his watch, he decided that he would use the little time he had left to center and anchor his magic and powers. Settling himself comfortably on the thick rug near his bed, he closed his eyes and slowed his breathing, pushing inside himself to see his own power and ready it for what was to come.

When he came out of his meditation trance, having been careful not to even think of going to the First Plan, the sun was starting to set.

Standing up slowly, wincing as his muscles protested against having spent hours in the same position, he stretched once before changing into his Athar clothes. Waving his hand, he closed the tunic before placing his knives and his dagger in their holsters. Putting on his belt, he checked on his darts and the small potion vials hidden in it. Finally he took his sword and after checking its length once more sheathed it at his left side. Finally he clasped his cloak around his neck and grabbed his three bags before making his way outside. He ignored the eyes following him on his way out.

He stopped by the stables to check on Shadow.

The stallion seemed to sense that something was amiss as he kept pushing against his chest as if sensing a battle was nearing and he wanting to be part of it.

“I’m sorry, Shadow, but you can’t come this time.”

He turned to Erin who was watching from the sides.

“Take good care of him, will you? And if I don’t come back, I made it so that he would be yours.”

He ignored the wide eyes of the young man. It was strange to call him boy since he was only a few years younger.

“He seems to like you and I want him to belong to someone who’ll treat him as he deserves.”



With a last pat against the muscled neck, he left, trying to ignore the neighs and the sounds of kicking coming from the stables.

He made his way to where the dragons had landed. Reald and five other people as well as the two apprentice healers escorted by another healer and the two volunteers. Harry repressed a snort.

As if! He knew those two must have done something to be sent to the human world, but didn't pry.

He went to tie his own bags to Rexeran's scales before making his way to where the riders were standing. They all looked up as he joined them.

"Evening, Athar," said Kobalt, extending his arm with a smile.

Smiling back, Harry took his arm.

"Evening."

Then he turned to face all the riders.

"I know you volunteered to come, but I must ask you once more if you are sure of your decision. You must know that there is a high chance that the Dark Lord managed to acquire blood from the Enchanter's line. It is then highly probable that he will try to complete the ritual on the Solstice. Knowing that, I need your decision now."

The riders looked at each other, a small smile on their lips, nodding before turning to Kobalt who shot a wry smile at Harry.

"Demenor already warned us before we left, Athar. All of us know why we are here tonight."

Harry returned his smile.

"Then, call me Harry, and let's go."

All the riders put on their helmets and walked to their riders, a few of them helping their passengers to climb behind them.



Reald was waiting for him next to Rexeran with Teneb, Celen, Ysela and Delia.

*/Greeting, Astyan/*

"Greeting, Rexeran"

"My mother apologized for not being as well as Doryan, but they had several people to meet, Harry."

The young wizard turned to the Elf Prince.

"You don't have to apologize. Thank you for coming."

*"You didn't think we would let you leave without saying good bye, Brother."*

Harry shook his head, chuckling.

He turned to Ysela and bowed.

"Thank you for being here, Lady."

Ysela waved his words aside.

"Call me Ysela, young man. And Delia would have never forgiven me if we hadn't come tonight."

Harry crouched down to kiss the young elf hand.

"Then thank you Delia."

"You have to come back real quick, Harry! You promise me to show me how to make fireworks!"

Shaking his head the young man ruffled her hair before standing up again and clasping his forearm with Teneb's.

"Desen hela athia" (Death and life)

"Lith tarx jomi" (Linked through all)



*"You better not die without me, Astyan"*

*"I would not dare, Heldren"*

Harry turned to Reald and saluted him, ignoring the cool edge of the man's voice. It seems the elf would never fully trust him. He helped him on his dragon after having transfigured some trappings out of a twig to make it easier on the elf.

Leaning against Rexeran, melding his mind to the one of his mount, he signaled to his wing to take flight. Twenty Dragons shot in the night skies, quickly becoming shadows before disappearing to the human world.

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They reappeared high above Hogwarts, a thick cover of snow was spread over the grounds of the school. The chill air bit their skin as they quickly dove to land on the grounds. A small group came out of the castle, melting the snow to make a way.

Harry recognized the bright Weasley red hair among them. He quickly slid to the ground, helping Reald down then untying their bags.

He saw Ron, Kingsley, a woman and two other men approach.

"Harry!"

Ron quickened his steps and was soon in front of him, grabbing in a strong hug.

"Hi, Ron."

The red-head shot him a smile.

"You're back just in time. The order will meet after dinner. The Vampires are here, as well as the Goblins."

Harry nodded as they started to walk towards the castle, while the rider kept looking around, taking in the difference and similarities to their world.



“How is Hermione?”

“Better, she was reading the comparative study of wandless versus focused magic when I left.”

Ron chuckled.

“She must be better then.”

“And how are you holding up here?”

“Not much more than what I told you this morning. We checked Blaise and all the others. They all suffered from a severe anemia from what the healers told us. It wasn’t present on their first scan when they were admitted. Two of them showed a puncture wound on their arm.”

Harry’s face turned somber.

“Did someone leave the school since they were admitted in the Hospital?”

Ron shook his head.

“No, not to my knowledge, the school has been on a lock-down for the past four days since we got report of chimeras and two Basilisks roaming the Forest.”

“I’ll have to check the wards and the school. If nothing or nobody left the school, then that means that the blood is still inside the castle and we can’t let Voldemort get his hands on it.”

Ron nodded as well as Kingsley who had been listening to the whole conversation.

“I’ll get as many people on it as possible. There are several spells which can be used to find blood,” said the Auror.

“Good. Kingsley, may I present you, Kobalt,” he gestured to the Elemental on his right, “Water-Elemental and my Second. They’ll be



more time later on to introduce all the members of my wing. Just know they all volunteered to come.”

Kingsley shot an appraising look at the riders following them.

“Thank you all. Any help will be appreciated in these times. Those masters of yours have finally realized we were at war and have started making themselves useful. The Swordmaster is holding a lesson to teach some basics in hand to hand fighting, knives and dagger. Same for the Archery master. The Horse Master has taken a liking to the herd of Thestrals living about the forest and has started taming them. The mind master is taking care of the compulsion check up as well as getting rid of any mind influence that might by pass the wards.”

Harry repressed a smile.

“That’s good to know. What about the Elemental Masters?”

Kingsley smiled.

“I think Hooch nearly killed them when Charlie burned two posts to ashes and some Beauxbâtons guy turned another into a giant oak. Since then, they’ve been working in the RoR.”

Kobalt shot a look at Harry.

“The RoR?”

“The Room of Requirements. It’s a room that provides you with what you need.”

The Elemental nodded, a bit spooked by such a thought.

They finally reached the castle doors and stepped inside.

Harry immediately noticed that the hall had at least tripled in size. It was filled to the last chair with a colorful crowd. Harry could make out the grey robes of the Unspeakables, the blue ones of the Aurors, the red ones of the Order of the Phoenix and so forth.



The students were eating on the right side of the Hall and all the leaders at the Teachers' table which had been expanded too.

He noticed a wall was inscribed with names.

"It's the names of all those that died in the war, vampires, Goblins, wizards, elves, Magis or Elementals," explained Ron, having caught his gaze to the memorial.

Meanwhile, Kingsley had hurried to the Head Table and spoken quietly to several men who talked to the thin bracelet on their wrists, before standing up and leaving the hall. Immediately fifty people stood up and followed them out.

It was then that Harry noticed that silence had fallen on the Hall, spare some hushed whispers and that they had stopped in the hall entrance.

They resumed their walk inside.

"Headmaster."

"Harry, it's good to see you again."

The old man had stood up and walked up to him, embracing his former student.

Harry returned the hug before pulling away, noticing for the first time how frail the aged wizard was.

"It's good to be back too, Headmaster." He turned to Kobalt and motioned to him to come closer. "May I present you my second, Kobalt, Water Elemental, as well as all the riders of my wing who volunteered to come here today?"

Dumbledore smiled to them, eyes twinkling.

"Welcome to Hogwarts, young man. Welcome all."

He clapped his hands and the hall seemed to grow again as a new table appeared on the left side.



“Do you need to eat? House Elves will set up quarters for all of you next to the wing where some of their people already live.”

Harry turned to the riders. He himself had not eaten but couldn't talk for all of them.

“Thank you for your hospitality, Wizard. We had yet to eat,” said Joal.

They all walked to the new table and tried not to look too startled as food suddenly appeared in front of them.

Harry turned to Ron.

“I'll eat with them and come talk with you afterwards.”

The red-head nodded and headed to a table on the right side where Harry spotted Cho, Susan, Justin, the Twins, Padma next to a blond girl with big dreamy eyes.

He went to sit next to Kobalt, starting to fill his plate and eat quietly.

“Harry?”

He looked up to see Kobalt eyeing the food strangely.

“Yes?”

“Where does the food come from?”

He tried not to laugh at the question every first year pondered at their arrival at Hogwarts.

“The school owns several lands and farms around from which the House-elves fetch food. Everything else is bought and brought here by the House Elves.”

“So it's real food.”

Harry nodded.

“As real as can be,” he assured, biting in a chicken leg.



The riders started to fill their plates and eat, talking quietly among themselves.

As he ate, Harry noticed that several faces were missing, more particularly Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson.

He frowned at that.

As the dinner drew to an end, he motioned to the riders to follow him.

"I'll show you your rooms."

They all stood up and headed for Hall's door. Ron, Susan and Cho stood up and met with him on his way.

"We'll show them their rooms, Harry. The twins told me they needed your help in the dungeons. Nobody seems to be able to go inside the Slytherin Dorms. Not even Snape's password seems to work, neither the passageway from his rooms to the common room."

A grim expression made its way to Harry's face.

"I saw that Malfoy and Parkinson were missing. Does anyone else?"

Ron looked around along with Cho and Susan.

"Yes, Morgain and Damien are missing, they're seventh year transfers from Beauxbâtons and Durmstrang," said Cho.

"Natasha is missing too," added Susan, "She's a fifth year from Beauxbâtons."

Joal went to Harry.

"You think that children might have taken the blood to that Dark Lord?"

The thought seemed to bother the Magis.

"Indeed. I think they might have been inducted during the summer and sent back to school to undermine the wards and steal the blood."



“Why let them come back then?”

It was Ron that answered.

“Because our Headmaster believes in second chances and didn't want to judge the children by their parents actions. Unless they wore the Dark Mark, they were allowed inside the school.”

Harry sighed.

“Well, my friend will show you where you'll live. You are free to do whatever you want once you have settled down in your quarters.”

Vanylle looked at her peers.

“I don't know for my comrades, Athar, but I would like to help with the search.”

Several other riders nodded in agreement with the Elf.

Harry hid his surprise.

“Any kind of help will be welcomed, Ron,” he pointed to his friend, “will answer any question you might have and point you to where you will be the most helpful. Thank you.”

The riders nodded to him before following Ron and Susan.

Harry turned to Cho.

“I need to see Zabini.”

“He's still in the Infirmary like all the others. Mrs. Pomfrey refused to let them out.”

Harry raked a hand through his hair.

“Alright, I'll go see him then join the search.”

Cho nodded.

“I will inform the Headmaster of this.”



“Thank you.”

They started to walk away when Cho called his name.

“Harry?”

The young man turned around.

“Yes?”

“It’s good to have you back.”

Harry smiled and turned back, striding to the Infirmary.

He found Zabini and the others sitting in their beds, all of them reading some kind of book, or playing cards.

The young Slytherin looked up when he heard the door open.

“Potter? So you’re back?”

Harry nodded sharply.

“I am. I came with some scholars and a full wing of Dragonriders.”

Zabini’s face turned somber.

“So the situation must be quite dire if those snobs deigned to loan us some assistance.”

“It is. But I must ask you something. Did the vampires come to you to bring you and your family to some safe places?”

Blaise frowned.

“They did, my whole family, even second degree cousins were spirited away. Only me, my sister and two of my cousins stayed here. We were all involved in the war effort and the Headmaster managed to convince the Vampires we would be safe. Why? What was so important about my family or theirs?” He pointed to a young man and a teenaged girl playing cards on another bed.



Harry looked at him piercingly.

“Your blood. It was your blood that Voldemort was after. All of you carry the Blood from the Enchanter as you are more or less direct descendants from Le Fay. He needed a large quantity to refine it and extract some pure Enchanter blood for the ritual.”

Blaise frowned.

“Thus the food poisoning... But who?...”

Harry raised an eyebrow at him and Blaise snorted.

“Draco and Parkinson... They must have already left by now.”

Harry started to pace.

“People are searching the castle as we speak. The wards seemed not to have been disturbed so there still subsists a small hope that they are still in the castle.

Blaise shook his head.

“I wouldn’t count on it. They must have left as soon as they got what they wanted.”

Harry nodded.

“I think so but we’re searching the castle as a precaution. Do you know how they might have left? To my knowledge, the school wards were reinforced and Ron told me the school has been on lock down for several days.”

Blaise shrugged.

“I know as much as you do. All the passageways, at least all those known to us were sealed, owls are filtered, portkeys and apparition are impossible, Floo access is heavily controlled, not to mention password protected. The wards prevent Animagi from entering and exiting while in their animal form.”

“Then it means they were given a way out. Probably by Voldemort.”



Blaise couldn't repress a shiver upon hearing the name though Harry didn't comment on it.

Harry talked a little more with the Slytherin before going to help with the search. As he had expected, they found nothing. They even took some blood from Blaise as a last resort. The Magis cast different spells bordering on Blood Magic to try to locate the blood, but nothing came up on the maps meaning it had been brought to an unplottable place.

It was on that conclusion that they all went to sleep a few hours before the sun started setting. Adrien had sent word that he and his people were checking on the other safe places and were going to snoop around to get a feel of the Dark Creatures situation and would meet Harry on the next night.

Harry was woken by movements around him.

His year in the dorm with the other Daryns had made him a very light sleeper.

He opened his eyes and saw Ron and Cho standing up while the others were stirring. He looked at his watch.

7 am.

Marvelous.

He stood up and went to his bag to find some training gear he quickly put on.

"I'm going to train for some time, I'll see you at breakfast," he warned Ron who nodded yawning.

Harry spent an hour in the Room of Requirements, training himself while making sure he didn't drain himself. As he stretched while cooling down, he went through everything he had to do.

They were the 18th of December. Should Voldemort go through with the ritual, he would start as the sun set on the night of the 21st.



That left them with little more than three days to ready themselves to whatever Voldemort had in store for them.

He needed to talk with the goblins and Vampires regarding the help they could lend them. He needed to meet with the Centaurs. He would have to talk to Rexeran to see if he could rally Magical creatures to them to help with the Dark Creatures Voldemort had managed to gather.

They needed to find out what that madman had in store for them. Harry didn't doubt the fact that he would set his army to attack Hogwarts while he went to fulfill the ritual.

Stopping by his rooms on his way to the Great Hall, he took a quick shower and changed to his less formal Athar clothes. It consisted in black pants, a red tunic with his Athar mark over the right breast.

The atmosphere was subdued at breakfast.

Like every secrets in Hogwarts, it had not taken long for the rumors of what had happened during the night to make their way through the school.

Harry had sat with the other riders, talking a little to make sure they had settled well. This time none of them hesitated to fill their plate with food.

"No news?" asked Kobalt.

"No. In my opinion Voldemort is refining the blood his servants brought him and he'll have pure undiluted Enchanter blood in time for his ritual."

"We should get ready for the worst then..."

Harry closed his eyes with a sigh.

"I fear so. I was told there had been unrest among the Dark creatures for the past months, that there had been a lot of disappearances. The bodies were often found a few days later, quite horribly maimed in most cases, they were all killed by a slit throat."



Joal's face turned grim.

"He is gathering power, isn't it?"

"He is or was. Some of it must be linked to the ritual, but he will probably use some to summon Demons again."

"You think he will attack here, don't you?" asked Rensha, pushing some of her silvery grey hair out of her face.

Harry nodded, dabbing his mouth with his napkin.

"I'm sure he will. This is the last stronghold, save for all the undercover resistance cells. Moreover, it is a symbol. Should he overtake Hogwarts, it will be a hard blow to the Light. He will also get access to the school power and nodes, not mentioning all the work of the Founders that are still lying around. Add to that that he is obsessed with killing me and Dumbledore and invading Hogwarts and you know why I'm sure he will send his army to attack us."

"What can we do, Athar? None of us came here to stay cooped up in this castle," stated Xend, waving his four-finger hand in the air.

Harry shot him a smile.

"You are free to train here, or help the masters here train my people. I will go with Rexeran to check the grounds and lay some traps of my own. You're welcome to come and help me with that too."

The riders started to talk quietly among themselves. By the end of breakfast, two third of them had decided to go with Harry, while the rest would check the grounds on foot as well as the castle for spying devices, magical anomalies and some would join the warders' team to reinforce and add their own expertise to the wards surrounding the schools and its grounds.

Passing Kingsley on their way out, Harry stopped to talk to him, motioning to the rider to continue.

"Auror Shacklebolt, we're going to scout the grounds."



Kingsley nodded.

“They were reports of several Death Eaters settlements not far from here. The Vampires have been taking care of the Werewolves packs roaming the forest but there are always more that come.”

“So they sided with Voldemort.”

Kingsley shuddered upon hearing the name.

“They did, Remus barely escaped with his life from his last attempt at swaying them to ours. The Dark Lord was most convincing.”

“At least the Vampires sided with us.”

Kingsley nodded.

“Yes, though they seem to like scaring our people to death.”

Harry snorted.

“Well, I’ll best be going. I’ll see you for Lunch”

The Auror nodded and resumed his way to the Hall

Harry met the riders outside and they all met with their Dragons.

*Greetings, Astyan.* Rexeran’s voice filled his mind, accompanied with a warmth and joy.

*Rexeran.*

He placed his head against the huge draconian one, relishing in the safe feeling filling him. Gently, he pulled back after a minute or two and looked at the Riders.

“We’ll go in teams of two or three. Look around for any enemy settlement, anomaly in the magic or landscape that would suggest a trap or a concealment charm. I was told Death Eaters and Werewolves might be around so try not to be seen I would like our presence to be as much of a surprise as possible.”



“What if we find something?”

“Nothing for now, we will all meet back here at noon and will decide together on the best course to follow.”

All the riders nodded and climbed on their Dragons, disappearing into thin air as riders and dragons concealed themselves.

As Harry and Rexeran merged their minds, the young man was startled to be able to see all of them again as colored shapes shining before him.

*/What is this?/*

*/Dragons can't hide from me, Astyan./*

Harry chuckled as they rose in the sky.

*/Alright, Rexeran, let's see what those murderers have in store for us./*

Harry and the riders spent the whole morning flying around the school, noting everything that seemed out of the ordinary.

They all met at Hogwarts at noon and went to eat in the Great Hall. They ate quietly before Harry signaled to them to follow him. He had been one of the first back along with Kery who had come with him. As soon as he had been back, he had asked Kingsley to get some people together for a meeting after lunch. They would discuss their findings and try to come up with a plan.

They stepped in the Room of Requirements that expanded and created an appropriate set up for a meeting.

Harry went to sit down at the large circular table that had appeared in the center of the room and looked at the map of the region that was displayed over it. Meanwhile the riders all took a seat around talking among themselves as they did so.

A few minutes later, Kingsley and ten other people entered. The Auror, quickly introduced his companions, though Harry recognized



Valyan, the Head Unspeakable, Perry, the Head Auror and Richardson, the VWF leader. Two others were part of the intelligence team, two from the coordination one, one a liaison to the Muggle world, another to the beings allied to the wizards. Dumbledore was the last one to arrive, his bright yellow with turquoise stripes robes nearly blinding everyone in the room.

The doors closed on him.

“So Harry, what did you all find?” asked Dumbledore.

“We scouted the castle and the area around for Death Eaters or spying devices.”

One by one, they told what had seen while Harry added it to the map. By the time Kery finished telling what he and Harry had seen, he was putting the final touch to his work.

Leaning back in his chair, he eyed the enlarged map of Hogwarts grounds he had been colouring as the riders spoke.

Hogwarts northern and eastern sides were lined by the Forbidden forest. The Lake was on the Southern one. That left the western side as the easy access for on-foot armies.

He however couldn't dismiss the access from the Forest as it would protect Voldemort's troops from early detection. Should Demons join the attack, they might come from anywhere, their powers enabling them to journey through the shadows.

Four packs of Werewolves were roaming the forest, as well as many other Dark creatures. Harry had even spotted chimeras, quintaped, kelpies and at least one nundu.

There were five settlements of Death Eaters: three on the western side and two on the other side of the lake.

Two more packs of Death Eaters were camping with the troops in the west. Several aerial squads had been seen training. Apparently the Dark Lord had also had his minions build siege weapons.



All in all, the situation was looking bleak for the Light side. Harry could only hope that they had upped the training since he had last been here and that their allies would be the ace up their sleeve that would tip the balance in their favor.

Following the report, they all started to discuss what to do.

An hour later, Harry was ready to go to sleep. For the past twenty minutes, they had been going in circles saying the same things over and over.

Harry and the riders would set up traps with the help of the Elemental Masters and those who had gained enough control to help. The Vampires had agreed to thin the Dark creatures' ranks as much as possible. The Centaurs, unicorns, phoenixes and various other creatures had also agreed to help. The Vampires would concentrate on the nundus. Being Undead, they weren't as affected by their breath as others.

The Goblins were to help with the traps as well as giving a hand to the castle defenses should it be attacked. The different wizarding factions were going to scout the grounds some more, help with the traps when they could, and relay the Vampires during the day to deal with the Dark Creatures.

The Merepeople living in the Lake had come to an agreement with Dumbledore. They would help defend their lake against invaders. Many Kelpies had already met their wrath as well as the Giant Squid's.

As Perry was about to repeat himself for the fourth time, Harry spoke up.

"I don't know about the others, but I don't think we need to have the plan explained once more."

"Young man, it is essential that all of us know what we have to do," stated the man.

Harry repressed the spike of annoyance shooting through him.



“And I think, Mr. Perry that all of us are intelligent enough to understand it the first time, not to mention the third one.”

The man flushed and would have spoken out had Harry not cut him.

“Now, if no one has anything to add, my men and myself will retire to get ready to do our part. We will meet with the Elementals to discuss their parts with them.”

Harry stood up, followed by the riders, Dumbledore, Valyant, the intelligence representative, the muggle liaison and creature liaison.

“Now see here, young man...”

Harry held up his hand.

“Mr. Perry, when you start treating me as an equal I will do so.”

He made his way outside the room, followed by all the other riders who had repressed a smile upon seeing their Athar putting the wizard in his place.

The Muggle liaison followed him quickly.

“Mr. Potter! Mr. Potter!”

Harry turned to face the man, Jason Thompson, a Muggle-born wizard from Salem that had left the Wizarding world to work in the Muggle one. He was working for the Crown.

“Mr. Thompson.”

“Mr. Potter, a pleasure to meet you.”

“Likewise, is there something you wanted to talk about?”

“Indeed, though we should wait for Headmaster Dumbledore before I tell you more.

“I told you to call me Albus, Jason,” said the aforementioned man, eyes twinkling as he joined them.



Harry shook his head, rolling his eyes.

He motioned to the riders to go on without him before giving the two wizards his full attention.

“What is the matter?”

Jason turned to Albus.

“Perhaps we could have this conversation in a more private setting?”

“Of course, my office is not that far,” answered the Headmaster.

A few minutes later, they had reached the man’s office and were settling in their respective chairs.

“Headmaster?” asked Harry, curious.

“Lemon drop, Harry? Jason?”

Harry gritted his teeth.

“Excuse me, Headmaster, I have a lot of things to do, so if we could get to the point?”

“Well said, my boy, well said. Jason, if you would?”

“Well, Mr. Potter,” the man paused to gather his thoughts, “as you know Voldemort’s attacks against the Muggle world have outed our world to them. Moreover, they have carried an extremely negative image of Wizardry. Anger is brewing and I don’t know how long our governments will manage to prevent a full-out war against Wizards to break.”

Harry repressed a sigh. He really didn’t want to get involve in this. He had already enough on his plate as it was without shouldering this burden.

“What is it you want from me, Mr. Thompson? You have to keep in mind that I’m not really the one you should be talking to. Our Minister or the Headmaster would be those aptest to help you.”



The wizard smiled.

"I know that, Mr. Potter. However you are own of the main figures in this war and my employers would like to meet the one the wizarding world is looking up to as their 'Saviour'."

Harry was about to protest that particular name but didn't have time as the liaison spoke up again.

"There will be a meeting of the various leaders of the Muggle world tomorrow night. A representative was chosen by all the wizarding communities for each continent. Mr. Dumbledore was chosen as Europe's but the Muggles specially asked for you to be present."

"I really don't think..."

Dumbledore's blue eyes sent him a piercing glance.

"I'm afraid your presence is mandatory, Harry. The Muggles were quite insistent."

Harry shook his head.

"Headmaster, mandatory or not, I think we all have much more important things to do for now. We've only got less than three days left to get ready for the Solstice."

"But the Muggles..."

"If Voldemort completes this ritual, the Muggles won't have anything to worry about, as there won't be much of their world left..."

Thompson's shoulders slumped down.

"Mr. Potter, please try to understand that..."

"Mr. Thompson, I can understand your predicament, but we are days away from a battle that will probably decide the outcome of this war. I'm sure the Muggles can understand that."

"They are afraid, they want assurances that..."



“And I want to be alive come Christmas and to do so, everything needs to be ready. I will agree to a meeting but only after the 21st, that is to say if I’m still alive.”

Thompson opened his mouth to try to convince the young man but Dumbledore shook his head.

“What was decided anyway? I sure hope you had the Ministries work on that,” asked Harry.

Dumbledore nodded gravely.

“Indeed. We all agreed that we would help the Muggles rebuild their cities. However what they don’t know is that we all decided to use a massive Obliviate. It is an Enchantment that will target all being without an active Magical core, or without the right shields to protect their minds. The Squibs with knowledge and or involvement in our world have been provided with protective amulets. As we speak there only remain two hundred of them unprotected.”

“What will be the replacement memories?” inquired Harry.

Thompson let out a small sad smile.

“Our experts have been working with our department to find an acceptable scenario to explain all the death and damage. The Story will be that the global warming was worse than what scientists had predicted and that several natural catastrophes occurred around the same time all around the globe: earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes, massive flooding. This led to several epidemics that made hundreds of victims before the governments were able to either quarantine people to underground structures or distribute vaccine. These natural occurrences were also the occasion that several terrorist organizations were waiting for to launch attacks against the occidental powers. That should explain the weapons.”

Harry nodded pensively.

“That’s quite an intricate scenario. Will it work?”

Thompson frowned.



“Many charm experts are working with Obliviators and Enchanters to come up with the spell needed and the requirements that will allow it to do its job.”

Harry rubbed his eyes, sighing.

“Do the Muggles know what you want to do?”

Dumbledore shook his head.

“No, they would try to stop us at all cost if they did.”

“What do they think need to be done?” asked Harry, curious.

Thompson cleared his throat.

“From what our Department was told, most are pushing for mandatory registration for all wizards as well as control devices to prevent us from harming a muggle or using too much power at once as well as research being led on us to find where our powers come from and how they could duplicate them.”

“They would use us as lab rats or treat us as dangerous creatures meant to be controlled.”

“To put it crudely, yes,” admitted Thompson.

“Well, I don’t really know what you want me to do, it’s not like they will listen to a sixteen year old.... I assume you will want me to go all out?”

Dumbledore and the other man nodded.

“Yes, they do not know anything about you, except what they might have found in their own files. They probably got your medical files and school files.”

Harry shrugged.

“The Dursleys never took me to a doctor or a hospital. I was never ill enough to be worth such an expense. The mandatory shots were made at a charity. As for my school files, well that will make them



underestimate me. I was not allowed to perform better than Dudley. And believe me, that's something."

Thompson repressed a grin.

"It will work to our advantage, then."

"Indeed, it will," agreed Dumbledore.

Thompson nodded and stood up.

"I'll go soothe some feathers then," he said, rubbing his temple.

"Don't hesitate to contact me if you feel they might do something foolish, Jason."

"I'll be sure to do it, Albus. Until then, take care."

The man stood up and left the room. Harry sat back in his chair.

"Is there something you want to talk about, Harry?"

The young man crossed his arm in front of him.

"Yes."

Silence followed his answer as he waited for his former Headmaster to ask.

Dumbledore finally gave in.

"What about?"

Harry uncrossed his arm and leant forwards.

"About the fact that you didn't let the Vampires hide every member of the Enchanter's line like they wanted to and had them remain in a school where known children of Death Eaters are also residing."

"Harry, my boy, you can't judge someone by his parents' actions. You should know how that feels."



“I’m not against second chances, Headmaster, but not when they endanger our whole world! Zabini and the others should have never stayed in the castle!”

“They were quite implicated in the war effort. Their sudden disappearance would have been a blow to the school’s morale.”

“So it has nothing to do with the fact that Zabini has become a leader of the “light” Slytherin and that you need him to bring the more hesitant or neutral SLytherin to your side.”

Dumbledore brought his hand together on his desk.

“I must admit that young Blaise proved to be a strong young man that convinced many to join us, in particular among the more hesitant.”

“That wasn’t worth the risk! Without the Blood, Voldemort couldn’t do anything!”

“Harry, Hogwarts is one of the most secure places in England. There was nearly no risks at having them remain in the castle.”

“Hogwarts might have been secure, but that didn’t prevent Malfoy or Parkinson from leaving to join their master with the last thing he required.”

He held up his hand, preventing Dumbledore from giving him one more justification.

“I don’t know how you convinced Adrien of this and I don’t want to. However is you had really wanted to save Malfoy and his friend, you should have never allowed him back to his father.”

That said, he stood up and left, making his way outside to meet with his team.

He spent the rest of the day in a blur, overseeing the different of riders and wizards as they reinforced the school’s defenses and layered the land surrounding the school with their own brand of trap.



A few teams were sent to spell away several of the traps Death Eaters had set up and set some of their own, the Elementals and their students going with them to add their final touch to the work.

As dusk fell and dinner passed, Harry went to his room to fetch his sword and some of his knives and daggers. He then put on a simple tunic and a pair of pants before walking calmly up the Tower he had used to practice.

He met very few people on his way up, the entrance being close to Filch office, a part of the castle the students tended to avoid.

He climbed silently not wanting to attract the twin ghosts residing there. Once up there, he started to stretch methodically.

For the first time in several weeks, he wondered how his guardian was faring, he hadn't been contacted by Arxeren for quite a long time now and would probably wouldn't see him until things were over, that if he survived.

It was only the slight shift in the air around him as well as the magical ripple signaling someone's arrival and the slight whistle of a blade being brought down that warned him of the attack.

He whirled around and raised his own blade to meet with Adrien's.

The Vampire's face was sporting an amused smile.

"Good, Always be on guard," he said as he stepped back, sheathing his sword to his side, imitated by Harry.

"Good evening to you too, Adrien," said Harry, nodding to Maximilien, Optah and Hien-Na. "Are the families safe?"

Adrien nodded.

"They all are. I wish to apologize for our oversight, Athar. We should have never let Dumbledore convince us."

"What is done is done, Adrien, no use crying over spilled milk. I know how convincing Dumbledore can be..."



The Vampire nodded.

“Indeed. I have gathered the Clans. Our army will be here on the night of the 20th. We thought it best that way. Vampires tend to get restless if confined for too long. Do you know of a place that will be able to house us and protect us from the sun?”

Harry quickly went over the various rooms inside the castle.

“How many vampires are we talking about?” inquired the young wizard.

Adrien shot him a dark smile.

“A little more than eight hundred vampires, among them one hundred Ancients. It will be the larger gathering of the Covens for the past millennia.”

Harry could not stop himself from gaping.

Eight hundred Vampires!

“But, but...”

Adrien smiled, showing white fangs.

“Your Headmaster and Minister made a good deal with us, one they signed in blood.”

“Isn’t it dangerous for your race’s survival?” asked Harry, frowning.

Adrien shook his head.

“The Keepers of Tradition and some warriors will stay behind to guard and teach our fledglings should worse come to pass, no matter what, our race and our legacy will survive.”

Harry nodded.

“I only have one place in mind that is big enough to house all your people and shield you from the sun...”







Well, these two chapters are now over with. Not that much action, but the next ones will compensate for it I hope.

Next chapter will show the last set up before the 21st of December as well as the start of the ritual.

Voila.

Thanks for reading an I hope you have enjoyed these two chapters.



